■ METRO / A17

C-5 Katipunan flyover closed to traffic from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily

■ WORLD / A10

Iraq war could cost US up to $3 trillion, says study

■ SPORTS / A20

RP Ladies Open tees off today at Manila Golf

■ WORLD / A11

Bird flu outbreak in Turkey worsens

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
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Muñoz-Palma laid to rest: 'She was in all our photos'

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and DJ Yap

FILIPINOS WILL MISS CECILIA MUÑOZ-PALMA's brilliance as the first woman justice of the Supreme Court, but her son Tadeo Palma will miss her smile the most.

Her colleagues and admirers will recall her courage, but her granddaughter

MUÑOZ-PALMA/ A4

Palace in quandary: Scrap 2007 polls, or call plebiscite?

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

INDECISION APPEARS TO have gripped Malacañang when it comes to proposals to scrap the elections next year or to call a plebiscite on Charter change.

PALACE/ A8

ANG TANONG SINO ANG MAGBIBILANG ?!?

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo, shows up in Koronadal City for yesterday's 66th Foundation Day. She has spurned anew former President Fidel V. Ramos' call for her to step down by June 2007, according to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

LYN RILLON

GMA rejects FVR quit call

Bunye: Cutting her term premature

By Christine O. Avendaño

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN LESS THAN A MONTH, PRESIdent Macapagal-Arroyo has rebuffed former President Fidel V. Ramos, rejecting his call that she step aside by June 2007 in the midst of the continuing political crisis hounding her administration.

But the 58-year-old President left open the possibility of her relinquishing power if the Constitution were amended to pave the way for the shift to the parliamentary system that she had proposed to Congress.

"President Arroyo sincerely appreciates

GMA REJECTS/ A8

After tea with FVR, Noli says he's open to shortened term

By Cynthia D. Balana

SAYING EVERYONE SHOULD BE willing to make sacrifices, Vice President Noli de Castro yesterday disclosed that some Lakas leaders, including former President Fidel Ramos, had offered him a seat in the proposed parliament and a senior post in the Cabinet if he agreed to cut short his term in 2007.

De Castro, in an interview with the INQUIRER, indicated he was open to the idea, if the people supported the proposed shift to a parliamentary form of government.

De Castro said that, during a dinner before Christmas, Ramos also spoke to him about the urgency of Charter change, particularly the proposal to put in place the elements of a parliamentary system by mid-2007.

Those elements would include congressional action on the proposal to amend the Constitution, launching of an information cam-

AFTER TEA/ A8

Opposition vows to revive impeach case against GMA

By Philip C. Tubeza and Michael Lim Ubac

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL Ramos' call for President Macapagal-Arroyo to step down by June 2007 received a resounding bipartisan rebuke in Congress yesterday, with the opposition announcing it was reviving the impeachment move against her.

OPPOSITION/ A8

VICE President Noli de Castro (left) and former President Fidel Ramos take time out for a snapshot during a meeting in the latter's 26th floor office at the Export-Import Bank in Makati City shortly before Christmas Day.

PHOTO FURNISHED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

POSTSCRIPT

Entrepreneurs overregulated, underfunded

SPECIAL REPORT

By Daxim L. Lucas

MORE AND MORE FILIPINOS FIND themselves patronizing and sometimes setting up alternative businesses, which provide greater "value for money" than more traditional companies, whether it comes to borrowing money, buying cell phone "load" or eating out.

With the country's economic engine perennially stuck in second gear, "sulit" has become a byword for people struggling to make ends meet as prices rise and buying power drops.

Given this reality, some business groups are asking the government to make life easier for businesses whose customers are low-income Filipinos.

"What we see is that there is too much government intervention in the process," says business leader Donald Dee. "To be able to set up even a small business, one has to apply for so many licenses and permits."

Dee, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), says this tedious process—especially at the local government level—deters potential entrepreneurs from setting up businesses that could better cater to the needs of "value-shopping" Filipinos.

Instead of trying to stamp out operations, which straddle the border of the underground economy, the government should provide entrepreneurial activities with incentives, Dee says.

How? Dee believes the government can help simply by getting out of the way.

"In fact, PCCI is now working with local governments to streamline the business registration and licensing process," he says.

Realizing that the bulk of the red tape—and corruption—for small businesses occurs at the local level, PCCI has asked several key local government units to deputize local chambers of commerce for administrative tasks like licensing and the renewal of annual permits.

"Hopefully, this will result in a more streamlined process," the PCCI chief says.

Already, Dee's sentiments have found

ENTREPRENEURS/ A7

Nur gets 6-hour furlough; release from prison seen

By Fe Zamora and Jocelyn R. Uy

JAILED MORO LEADER NUR MISUARI yesterday traveled to the Blue Mosque in Taguig City from his detention quarters at Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, to observe the Muslim holiday Eid'l Adha (or Feast of the Sacrifice).

Misuari was on a court-granted 6-hour pass when he arrived at Maharlika Village in Taguig shortly before 6:30 a.m., accompanied by a 10-vehicle convoy composed of some 100 members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force.

Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, commander of Joint Task Force Ranao, served as his personal escort.

It was the first furlough in four years for Misuari, the detained ex-governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and former University of the Philippines professor who organized the Moro National Liberation Front in the late 1960s.

Dressed in a light brown suit and tie, Misuari attended the hourlong Eid'l Adha prayers held to mark the end of the annual hajj in Mecca.

Minutes after the prayer service at the Blue Mosque, he addressed the more than 100 Muslims present, saying: "This Feast of the Sacrifice is the beginning of a new phase for our struggle for peace in Mindanao...

"Brothers and sisters, dedicate your search for peace in the entire archipelago, especially in the Islamic world."

Misuari and his convoy arrived back

NUR/ A4

REM ZAMORA

JAILED Muslim leader Nur Misuari, out on furlough after four years in prison, kisses his daughter Nurhata, 4. At left are his other children Nuredha, 11, and Khalid, 8. He was at the Blue Mosque in Taguig City yesterday to observe the Muslim holiday Eid'l Adha.

RP muscles in on medical tourism, introduces 'hilot'

By Christian V. Esguerra

MOVE OVER, THAI MASSAGE. THE Pinoy *hilot* is here.

The country is set to market its own brand of massage therapy in the world stage as part of the Philippine Medical Tourism Program started by the government two years ago.

The strategy is to consolidate at least seven popular therapies which are still practiced by indigenous people in the country, according to Health Undersecretary Jade del Mundo.

Besides the common *hilot*, included were the "*dinalisay, kisig galing, unang lana, tapik kawayan, paligo, oslob and dagdagay*," the latter a form of tribal foot massage, Del Mundo told the INQUIRER in an interview.

"The Pinoy *hilot* has therapeutic benefits," he said. "We'll just remove the supernatural dimension and make it scientific in consonance with international standards."

Del Mundo said the government had tapped experts in various local massage therapies from among indigenous peoples. This would be popular among foreigners who would be lured by the local medical tourism program, he said.

The indigenous experts will also train other therapists in the intricacies of *hilot*, he said.

Therapists will use virgin coconut oil and other herbal concoctions which will be sourced locally.

Taking its cue from the success of its Asian neighbors, the government began

RP MUSCLES/ A7

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming widespread rains which may trigger flash floods and landslides over the eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao. Bicol region will have mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers. Rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/01/11/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

New Southcom chief named

By Alcuin Papa

A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES who was linked to electoral fraud in the 2004 elections was named the new commander of the Southern Command (Southcom) in Mindanao.

At a press briefing yesterday, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga announced the appointment of Maj. Gen.

Gabriel Habacon to head Southcom, the military's largest command. Southcom has been at the forefront of the fight against the Muslim insurgency for decades.

Habacon was chief of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, otherwise known as Tabak, which has the most battle-hardened soldiers in Mindanao. He replaces Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan who is retiring today. Adan was Southcom chief for only three months.

Senga said Habacon, who is due to retire on Sept. 9, was the most competent officer to head Southcom. "His new position is based on his competence, overall capability and leadership quality. Among the three division commanders in Mindanao, Gen. Habacon is the most senior," Senga said.

Hello Garci

Habacon's name, along with that of three other ranking officers, cropped up in the "Hello Garci" tapes alleging election fraud by President Macapagal-Arroyo and then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano during the 2004 elections.

At the time, Habacon was chief of Task Force Comet, whose jurisdiction included Western Mindanao. After the elections, Habacon was promoted and given command of the 1st Infantry Division.

Senga also announced the designation of Lt. Gen. Samuel Bagasin as chief of the Central Command (Centcom) in the Visayas. He replaces Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio who is retiring on Jan. 21. Bagasin is due to retire on Sept. 19.

Last September, Bagasin was set to assume the post of Southcom chief when, at the last minute, it was given to Adan.

Bagasin was instead named AFP deputy chief of staff, the third highest post in the military with offices at Camp Aguinaldo. Once Bagasin leaves for Centcom, he will be replaced at Aguinaldo by Air Force vice commander Maj. Gen. Christie Datu.

The Western Command (Wescom) based in Puerto Princesa City is also set to change hands after Vice Admiral Ruben Domingo retires on Feb. 14 to be replaced by Rear Admiral Tirso Danga, currently Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (J2).

Danga was caught up in allegations the military had wiretapped President Macapagal-Arroyo and other government officials resulting in the "Hello Garci" tapes.

Finally, AFP Vice Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Ariston de los Reyes is set to retire on Feb. 16 and will be replaced by Maj. Gen. Antonio Romero, currently chief of the AFP's Resource Management Office.

Habacon, Bagasin and Datu were classmates in Philippine Military Academy Class '73. Romero belongs to Class '74 while Danga is a member of Class '75.

Meanwhile, former AFP chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu (ret.) has been named the country's special envoy to the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga).

President Arroyo appointed Abu during the BIMP-Eaga leaders' summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last month.

Abu received his first briefing on Mindanao and on the BIMP-Eaga from Mindanao Economic Development Council chair Secretary Jesus Dureza. *With Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Fugitive officer has retirement gift for Adan

By Alcuin Papa

MARINE CAPT. NICANOR Faeldon has given Southern Command (Southcom) chief Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan a retirement present the latter won't soon forget.

Faeldon yesterday released a new set of photos on his website showing him in the latest military camp he visited—Southcom headquarters in Zamboanga City.

The two pictures showing him standing next to the base grandstand and talking on his cell phone were taken a stone's throw away from Adan's office, Faeldon said.

In the photos, Faeldon was wearing a white shirt with the image of the Philippine flag flying at half-staff and the word "Pilipino" printed on it. It is the same image that appears on the home page of his website.

In a text message to reporters covering the defense beat, Faeldon said his visit to Southcom was a "going-away present" for Adan who is retiring today.

"Captain Faeldon has a going-away present for Gen. Adan on his retirement. Faeldon delivered his gift to Adan's office in Southcom. It can be viewed on his website," the text message read.

In a statement posted on the website, Faeldon said: "Unless those corrupt generals man the gates themselves, no one can stop me from going in and out of these camps. The enlisted men and officers of the military and the police who remain loyal to the people will not turn me in. No one is coddling me, rather, there are members of the police and the military who are exercising civil disobedience together with me."

Faeldon's visit to Southcom HQ was purportedly the second he made surreptitiously to a military camp, even as the military has made recapturing him a priority.

Earlier he posted three photos and two video clips of his supposed visit to Western Command (Wescom) headquarters in Puerto Princesa City last week. Over the weekend, he posted two more pictures showing him reading two newspapers, one of them the INQUIRER, while standing in front of the Wescom multipurpose hall.

"We are still verifying that (the Wescom visit)," Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga told reporters at a press briefing yesterday.

"Shortly after the Palawan pictures were released, the Western Command denied that Faeldon could go in and out of the camp at will. Adan is expected to make the same denial," Faeldon's statement on his website said.

The Marine captain was one of the leaders of the 2003 Oakwood mutiny. He escaped from his military escorts on Dec. 14, 2005, after attending a hearing of the coup charges against him and the other mutiny leaders at the Makati Hall of Justice.

Since then, Faeldon has launched a civil disobedience campaign in cyberspace to press for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Flavier, Pangilinan to attend Council of State meeting

By TJ Burgonio

UNLIKE SOME COLLEAGUES who have threatened to snub it, two Senate leaders say they plan to attend the Jan. 24 Council of State meeting called by President Macapagal-Arroyo out of a sense of duty and in the spirit of constructive dialogue.

Senate Pro Tempore Juan Flavier and Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said yesterday that they saw no reason to snub the meeting.

"If the aim is to create unity, fence-mending, it's a good move," Flavier said at a news briefing. "In such meetings, the more the better. The more, the more effective. Plus, if you can create consensus through that system, good for the country."

He said he would consider any invitation "if only to get a feel of what's going on."

Pangilinan said he would attend the meeting because it was his duty to do so.

"I will attend the meeting because I am duty-bound. We are open to the initiative, but our attendance is premised on the principle of obligation and constructive dialogue," he said in a statement.

He added: "From the start, I have maintained that the only way out of the country's political stalemate is through constructive dialogue among key players of society. The premise of the proposed Council of State is parallel to our agenda of diplomatic communication."

Flavier and Pangilinan are members of the Council of State along with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

Drilon has not decided whether to attend the meeting since he has neither been invited nor informed of the meeting's agenda, a member of his staff said. Pimentel had declared earlier he would snub the meeting.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the Palace was drawing up the agenda as well as the final list of people to be invited.

Pangilinan, who along with Drilon and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon called on Ms Arroyo to resign in July amid allegations she had stolen the presidency, said political leaders should consider attending the meeting.

"If convening the Council of State will help us manage and process our political conflicts effectively without our having to abandon our political convictions, then we should give it a chance," he said.

"We must find new ways to be able to manage our political conflicts within the confines of the Constitution."

Pangilinan, however, said the success of the meeting lay in "how the dialogue is to be executed with sincerity and objectivity."

"We hope that all partakers will be sincere and that all voices will be heard in the congress so that the purpose of the assembly will not be betrayed," he said.

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ESPERAT KILLING

DOJ admits error in letting suspect go

By Armand N. Nocum

ONE OF THE ALLEGED MASTERMINDS IN the killing of journalist Marlene Esperat has reportedly left the country even if a court in Sultan Kudarat has yet to rule on a motion by prosecutors asking it to reconsider an earlier ruling dropping him from the murder case.

In an interview, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez admitted that his prosecutors may have erred in not moving quickly to secure a hold departure order against Osmeña Montañer, a former finance officer of the Department of Agriculture regional office based in Cotabato City.

"Maybe we overlooked that aspect," he said of the need to have asked for a hold order.

Reports emanating from the family of Esperat showed that Montañer could have left with his own family for a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia early this month. Members of the slain journalist's family feared that Montañer would flee from justice.

DOJ prosecutors asked the Regional Trial Court in Tacurong City last month to rescind its order dismissing Esperat and fellow accused Estrella Sabay from the murder charges. Both had been tagged as the masterminds in the killing last March of Esperat, a hard-hitting columnist in Tacurong's The Midland Courier.

In a 22-page motion for reconsideration, the prosecutors said the decision of Judge Francis F. Palmones Jr. would encourage the killing of more journalists in the country and accused the judge of bias toward Montañer and Sabay.

"This injustice, until rectified, shall stand out as a monument to the failure of our criminal justice system and the culture of impunity that will make the Philippines deserve the label as the most murderous country for journalists," prosecutors led by Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito R. Zuno said in their motion.

Palmones' Aug. 23, 2005 decision dismissing the charges against Montañer and Sabay left four of their alleged henchmen as accused in the murder case.

'Loose cannons' in Garci tape probe

DESCRIBING FIVE PROSPECTIVE NEW WITNESSES as "loose cannons" from the opposition, administration lawmakers yesterday urged the Senate to focus its investigation into the wiretapping of President Macapagal-Arroyo's conversations on its security aspects instead of delving into alleged fraud in the 2004 elections.

Malacañang itself belittled the upcoming resumption of the Senate's probe into the "Hello Garci" wiretapping controversy and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon's statement on Monday that he had five new witnesses and two more tape recordings showing "massive" wiretapping of a host of personalities before and after the elections.

Biazon chairs the Senate's committee on national defense conducting the probe, which is to resume on Jan. 19 after Congress' Christmas recess.

"The worst that the heavily recycled wiretap issue could bring is already over and our detractors will gain nothing in the national interest by kicking this dead horse," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said at a news briefing.

"Based on our research and gut feel... most of our countrymen are tired of this controversy, many of them prefer to move on," he added. "There are more things we can devote our time and effort to."

Representatives Monico Puentevella (Lakas, Bacolod City), chair of the House committee on transportation, and Douglas Cagas (NPC, Davao del Sur), head of the House contingent in the Electoral Tribunal, dismissed the new witnesses as part of "a new production" meant to revive an investigation they claimed had "lost steam and focus."

The two congressmen said in a joint statement that the planned presentation of the five new witnesses showed that the opposition's "witness academy has been very active during the congressional break in scouting and honing witnesses" to corroborate allegations of election cheating against Ms Arroyo. *Philip C. Tubeza and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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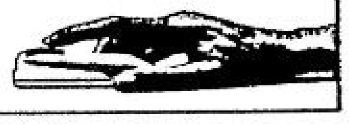

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Muñoz-Palma laid to rest: 'She was in all our photos'

From page A1

Bernadette Palma will remember her as the "very warm and very caring grandmother" they called Nanita.

Muñoz-Palma, who died on Jan. 2 at 92, was buried yesterday afternoon beside the grave of her husband, law dean Rodolfo Palma, at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City.

Constitutional expert Fr. Joaquin Bernas led the interment ceremony.

"With a nation that demanded 100 percent of her time, she still found the strength to give her family 100 percent of herself," granddaughter Tracy Palma said after the funeral Mass at Mt. Carmel Church on Broadway in Quezon City.

The funeral was attended by Muñoz-Palma's three children, 15 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren, other relatives, friends and colleagues in the judiciary, including Hilario Davide, the recently retired Chief Justice.

Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte and Marikina Mayor Marides Fernando also came.

Davide told the INQUIRER that the nation had lost an icon in Muñoz-Palma, whom he described as his "role model as a jurist."

"We only hope that her vision of a judiciary with integrity and courage is continued," he said.

High emotion

The funeral convoy of almost 150 cars arrived at the memorial park at 3:15 p.m.

More than 20 employees of the Marikina City Hall gathered in front of the gate.

Family members took turns in viewing the body for the last time, breaking into tears and embracing one another, seeking strength in their grief.

Muñoz-Palma's great grandchildren, many of whom were in grade school, wept profusely.

The tomb was sealed at 4:20 p.m. Family members, still in tears, released doves shortly afterward.

Tadeo Palma later told the INQUIRER that his mother was "very close" to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, even those who grew up abroad.

"She would make overseas calls to talk to them, always ending the conversation with 'I love you,'" he said.

Tadeo also said that unlike her public image as a stern jurist, his mother always showed her love for her family.

"I will miss her smile. She was a very sweet mother," he said.

Julita Dilarama, 63, who had worked in Muñoz-Palma's household for more than 40 years, was overcome with grief.

Her daughter Maritess said she had been asking her mother to live with her and her family but the latter chose to take care of Muñoz-Palma.

Maritess also said the late justice was "very generous," and had put her through college.

Memories

Tracy Palma said her memory of her Nanita would always be of the gentle woman who visited them often in their home in the United States.

She said her grandmother always took it upon herself to be present at all important occasions in the lives of her loved ones.

"She was in all our photos" even though this meant making tiring trips from the Philippines to the United States and back again, Tracy said.

Another grandchild, Bernardo Palma II, recalled how his grandmother accompanied him for treatment when he suffered asthma attacks as a boy.

"I often had asthma attacks during ungodly hours. By ungodly, I mean really ungodly, like 2 a.m., 3 a.m. I would be confined at the Quirino Memorial Medical Center," he said.

Each time, "Nanita would be there," he recalled, "To think she was already 70 at the time."

Bernardo thanked Muñoz-Palma "in behalf of the family and the republic of the Philippines" for being a "pillar of strength for the weak" and "a cradle of light in times of darkness."

'Codigo'

At necrological rites on Monday night at Mt. Carmel Church, retired Justice Rizalina Bonifacio-Vera said that while Muñoz-Palma topped the bar, she needed notes (or "codigo") to deliver a joke.

Top women legal personalities and civic leaders shed their stern mien Monday night to recall light moments with the woman they called "Ate Celing."

Bonifacio-Vera said that in their youth, there were few women in the judiciary—and most were assigned to domestic and juvenile courts.

She said their group—which included Corazon Agrava, Lourdes San Diego, Amor Melencio-Herrera, Leonor Inez Luciano, Regina Ordonez-Benitez, Carolina Griño-Aquino, Meilla Mallare-Philips and Delia Medina—met regularly to shoot the breeze.

"We would swap naughty jokes. Celing did not contribute naughty jokes, but she was an avid listener," Bonifacio-Vera said.

And whenever a joke caught her fancy, Celing would ask Bonifacio-Vera to write it down so she would not miss the punch line when she relayed it to her husband.

"She was a bar topnotcher who needed a 'codigo,'" Bonifacio-Vera said, eliciting laughter from her audience.

Muñoz-Palma was also remembered by her friends from the Zonta Club of Manila, the Philippine Tuberculosis Society and the University of the Philippines' Women Lawyers' Circle.

With a report from Fe Zamora

WE'LL MISS YOU NANITA
The country will miss the brilliance of Cecilia Muñoz-Palma, the first woman justice of the Supreme Court, but her great grandson will miss the "very warm and very caring grandmother" he called Nanita. Muñoz-Palma, who died on Jan. 2 at 92, was buried yesterday beside the grave of her husband, law dean Rodolfo Palma, at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City. JOAN BONDOC

Nur gets 6-hour furlough …

From page A1

in Laguna at about 11 a.m.

Misuari, 65, has been held at Fort Sto. Domingo since January 2002. He is facing rebellion charges for an attack on a military camp in Jolo, Sulu, in November 2001.

But he should soon be enjoying medical leaves like the Philippines' other top prisoner, deposed President Joseph Estrada.

"This [furlough] is a prelude to Misuari's freedom," Dr. Max Jundam, head of the MNLF People's Bureau, told the INQUIRER.

According to Jundam, efforts were under way to allow Misuari to seek medical attention outside Fort Sto. Domingo. He said Misuari's lawyers were also working to get him out on bail.

"It's been a long process, but it's giving us results," Jundam said.

He said House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez were involved in the "process" to help Misuari regain his freedom.

'Dapat lang'

Tarhata, Misuari's third wife and the mother of his three youngest children, said the furlough was "well-deserved though long overdue."

MISUARI raises a fist as he addresses followers outside the Blue Mosque in Taguig Tuesday. REM ZAMORA

"*Dapat lang, di ba* (It's but fitting, isn't it)? He's been detained for four years on weak charges. He deserves to be freed," Tarhata told the INQUIRER.

"Maas (leader) was a Peace Awardee of the United Nations, and he is being detained as a terrorist?" she said.

Hadji Ahmad Omar, vice mayor of Luuk, Sulu, and a former MNLF commander, also welcomed the court decision allowing Misuari to pray at the mosque in a Muslim community.

"This will show to the people that religion has nothing to do with the Mindanao war," Omar said.

A surviving member of the MNLF's core group, the so-called "Magic 8," Omar said he would like to see Misuari receive medical attention as befitting a Muslim leader.

"No matter the situation, Misuari will always be chairman of the MNLF and the Muslims in Mindanao," Omar said.

A mayor of Luuk for 24 years, Omar was among the first eight Tausug warriors who trained in Sabah and formed the core group of the MNLF in the early '70s.

'The problem of war'

Of the eight, only Maas Bawang, Tupay Loong and Omar are still alive.

Misuari expressed the hope that Mindanao would finally be able to achieve "real and genuine" peace.

"We need to solve the problem of war that never ceases in our homeland. If we put an end to war, we are going to have what we call a durable, lasting peace that will benefit all … That is the prerequisite of investors," he told reporters at a press conference.

It was in 1996, during President Fidel V. Ramos' administration, that a peace agreement was forged between the Philippine government and the MNLF with the assistance of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Committee of the Six chaired by Indonesia.

In November 2001, Misuari's followers attacked an Army camp in Jolo after he criticized the government's pace in implementing the peace agreement.

Misuari, who was then ARMM governor, was unhappy with the amount of public funds to rehabilitate and develop impoverished and conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

He tried to stop the holding of the ARMM elections but the Army put down his rebellion in less than 24 hours, forcing him to flee to Sabah, where he was arrested and sent back to Manila.

On the aborted uprising in Jolo that left over 100 people dead, Misuari said: "I did not start the war … We don't want war. Misuari doesn't want war. The Bangsamoro people don't want war, nor the Christians nor the Lumad … We don't want to be uprooted from our homes time and again, we don't want to see our houses destroyed by war."

He said peace was necessary for Mindanao to rise from its poor state, because investors would only have courage to get involved in an area that was stable.

"And that was the reason we tried our very best to promote genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao," he said. "But somehow, some invisible hands were there at play to frustrate all our efforts."

Commitment

In the middle of the press conference, Misuari's children by Tarhata—Nuredha, 11, Khalid, 8, and Nurhata, 4—embraced and kissed their father.

"My children will all be committed to pursue the construction of their homeland and exorcise the evil of war," Misuari said.

The children were taken to the Blue Mosque late in the morning to be with their father.

Tarhata, however, immediately proceeded to Fort Sto. Domingo on Monday afternoon when she learned that her husband had been granted temporary freedom from 6 a.m. to noon yesterday by Executive Judge Sixto Marella of the Makati City Regional Trial Court.

Misuari said without elaborating that there was an ongoing initiative to resolve his case.

He said there was nothing that the government would gain from his "rotting" in jail.

He also affirmed his support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Later in the day at the South Cotabato Sports Complex, where she attended Koronadal City's 66th founding anniversary celebration, the President welcomed Misuari's expressed support for her administration.

Dolorfino, who had accompanied Misuari to the Blue Mosque, quoted Ms Arroyo as saying: "I welcome that (Misuari's support). It's a positive development."

Not for FVR

In Manila, Justice Secretary Gonzalez said Misuari was back in the Palace's good graces.

But he denied that the Palace's softened stance toward the Moro leader was part of the supposed effort to placate former President Ramos, and said it was "in the light of the government's peace initiative" with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Gonzalez said it was not Ramos but De Venecia who had "interceded" for Misuari.

With reports from Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Armand N. Nocum in Manila; Reuters

Correction

IN THE banner story of the INQUIRER on Jan. 7, it was misstated that Dr. Esperanza Cabral was the national campaign manager of then presidential candidate Miriam Defensor-Santiago in the 1992 national elections. She was not, it being against the law for civil servants (she was director of the government-run Heart Center of the Philippines) to engage in partisan politics. She did serve as Santiago's campaign manager in the 2001 senatorial election when she was no longer in the government service.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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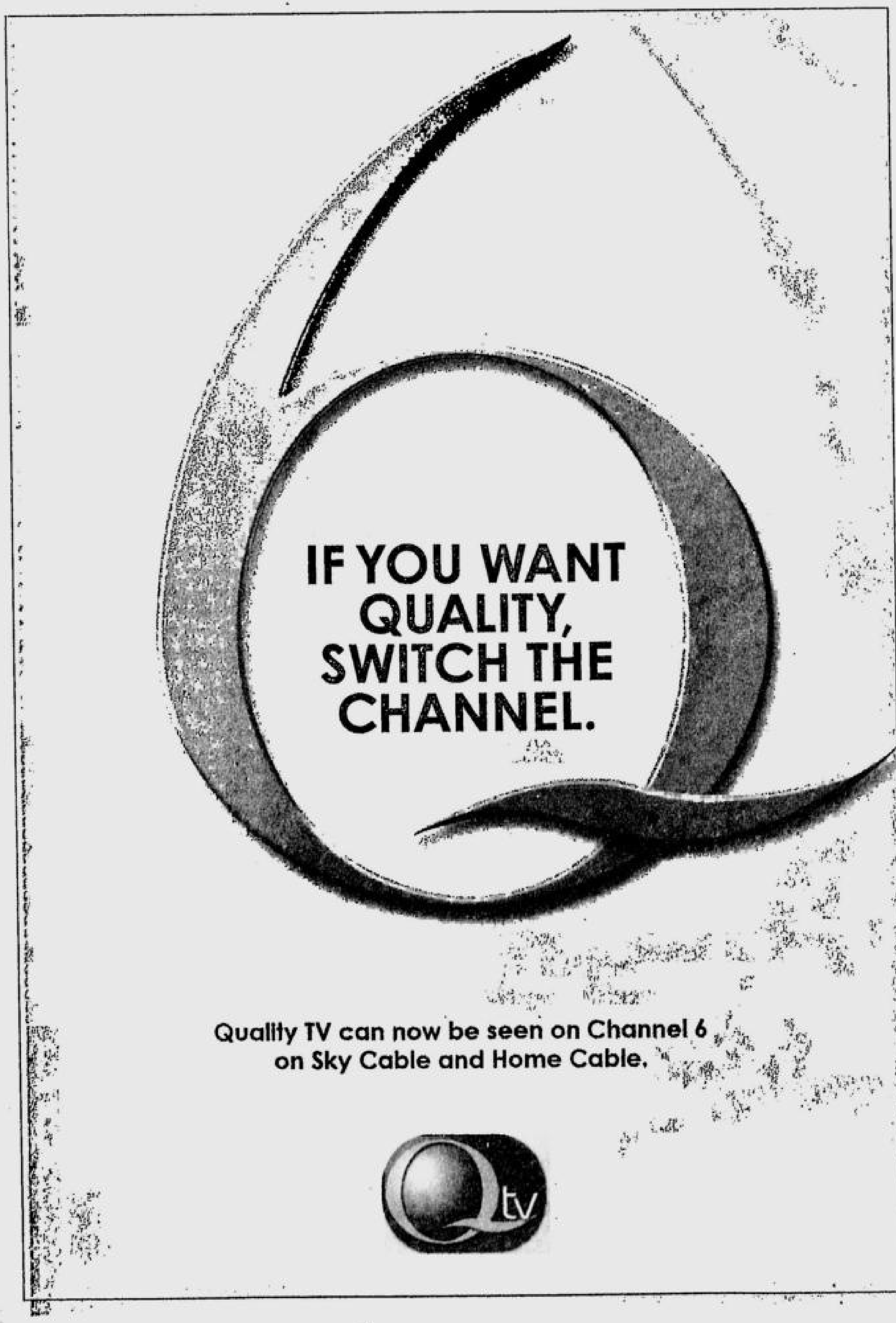

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Sacada's bittersweet affair with sugar

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CANDON CITY—THE SACADA (sugarcane plantation workers) who went to Hawaii 100 years ago must have had a bittersweet relationship with sugar.

They never talked about their historic role in the sugarcane industry in Hawaii to their grandchildren yet they also decided to grow their own sugarcane fields here.

"He never talked about Hawaii," said 77-year-old Purita Gironella Guirnada-Cabanela of his grandfather, Francisco Gironella. Francisco was only 18 when he went to Hawaii together with his father, Simplicio, and three other brothers.

"We only learned that he was one of the original sacada after reading the INQUIRER," Cabanela said.

"Maybe they felt so bitter about their experience and were humbled by it," said Rosario Castro, a fashion designer and great granddaughter of Francisco.

Castro, after reading the INQUIRER, decided to make a hasty research on her great grandfather.

She gifted Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle with her creation, a suit made of Santiago *abel* (Iloco woven cloth), when Lingle's entourage passed by Candon on Monday.

Humble beginnings

"We were shocked by the revelation that our ancestors were sacada in Hawaii for we were never told about their humble beginnings," Castro said.

Francisco was already married and had a son and a daughter when he joined his father Simplicio, 56, and brothers Mariano, 23; Vicente, 19; and Antonio, 15, for the trip to Hawaii in 1906.

The others were brothers Prudencio, 28, and Cecilio Sagun, 27; Mariano, 21, and Celestino Cortez, 19; Julian Galmen, 20; Martin de Jesus, 22; Apolonio Ramos, 26; Marcelino Bello, 28; Filomeno Rebollido, 30; and Emilio Dasalla, 30.

Residents here believed that all the 15 sacada came from Candon and local officials here lamented why they were not included among the areas where Lingle's delegation made an official stopover.

The 15 were celebrated during their arrival in Hawaii on Dec. 6, 1906 aboard the SS Doric. The Filipinos were seen even then as the more faithful and docile replacements of the Japanese and Korean farmers who were then clamoring for better wage.

Simplicio Gironella was the first to return after a month of working at the Ola'a sugar plantation because of asthma.

"So maybe that's where we got our asthma," joked Cabanela, a retired schoolteacher.

She and Castro did not know when Francisco returned to the Philippines (eventually all the 15, except for Bello, returned home) but they never heard from their relatives about his past in Hawaii.

Two of Francisco's three sons eventually finished their studies in the United States. Francisco died in 1948.

Cabanela, in a letter, informed Lingle that the Gironella family house and their memorabilia were burned down during the Japanese occupation.

Harsh conditions

But Castro researched on what the Gironella brothers did after returning to the country.

"When [Francisco] came back to Candon from Hawaii, he bought acres of land from his hard-earned keeps and started his own sugar plantation," Castro said.

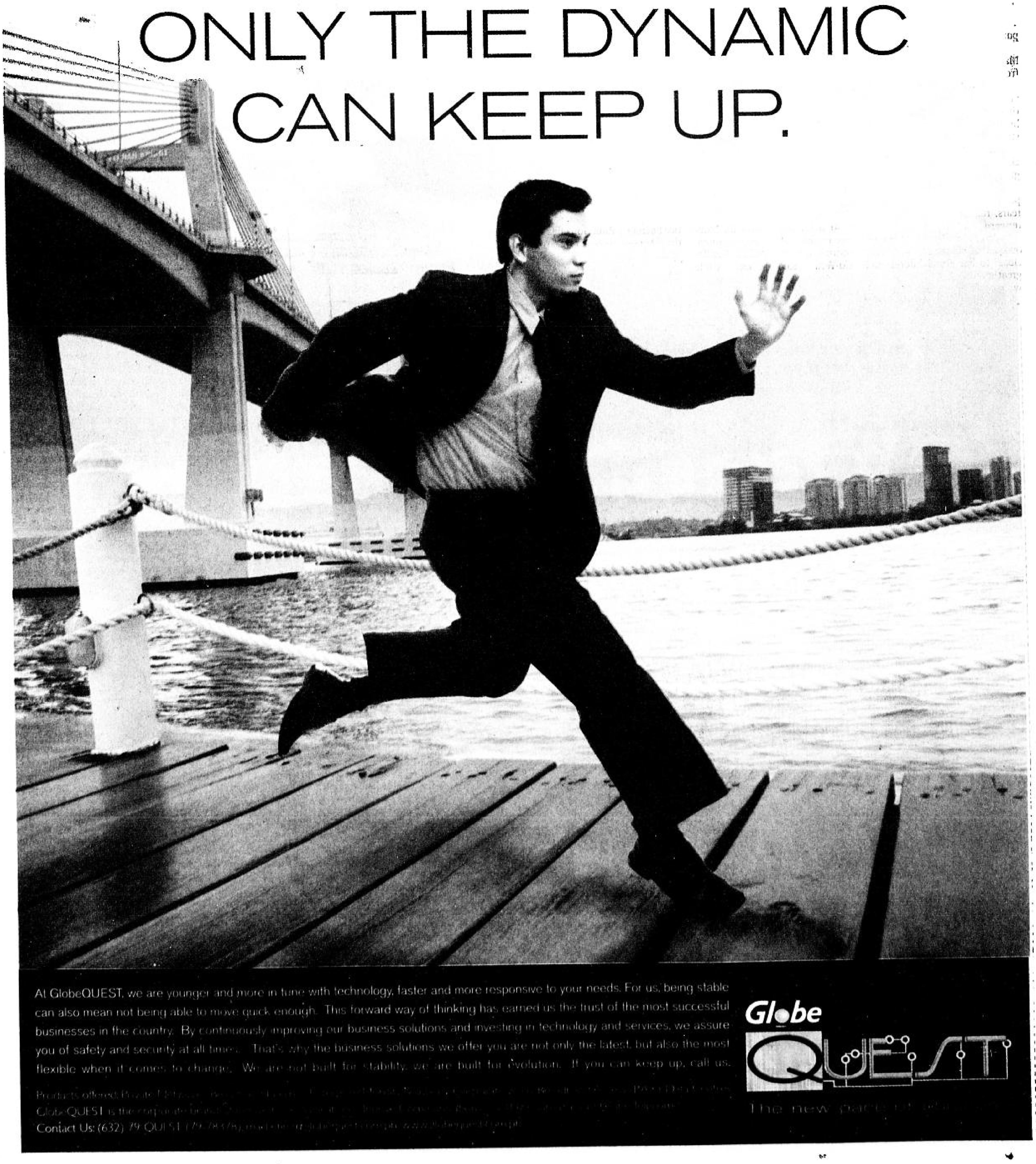
"Maybe he realized that if he could survive working in harsh conditions in a foreign land cutting sugarcane, he might as well do it here," Cabanela said.

"He owned a stable of horses to visit his farm in the morning," Castro said. "He came to prove that what he could do in Hawaii, he could also do in his country."

"His brothers also did the same. Up to this present generation, the hundreds of acres of property they bought exist. This has started the sugar plantation in Candon and that during the term of Mayor Valentin Abaya, Candon became the sugar central of Ilocos Sur," Castro said.

SACADA descendants Rosario Castro (left) and Purita Cabanela.

LEONCIO G. BALBIN, JR.



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Suspect in judge's slay set to turn state witness

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA – One of the suspects in the killing of Pasay City Judge Henrick Gingoyon might be turned by the authorities into a state witness, said a police official yesterday.

Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Aurora, Quezon) police director, said suspect Rudy Baclor appeared to be "not the most guilty among the suspects," and could be used to strengthen the case against his five co-accused who were under detention in Cavite.

"Baclor's statements will definitely strengthen our case against the suspects and make it airtight. He can be a good state witness," Verzosa told the INQUIRER in an interview at his office.

Citing the police investigation, Verzosa said it appeared it was in Baclor's house at Green Valley Subdivision in Bacoor, Cavite, that the suspects plotted the murder.

He said Baclor was also allegedly part of the conduit for the P150,000 paid to alleged gunman Rodolfo Cuer, and was a lookout and helped conduct the surveillance on Gingoyon a few days before the judge was shot and killed near his home in Bacoor on New Year's Eve.

First to admit

Verzosa said Baclor's sworn statement admitting his participation in the crime bolstered his "qualification" to be a state witness.

Police said that, of the suspects, Baclor was the first to admit responsibility for the killing and urged his co-accused to do the same.

But Verzosa said that before Baclor could be made a state witness, the Philippine National Police must secure the approval of the National Bureau of Investigation since both agencies had jointly filed the case against the suspects.

"We filed the case jointly so we must make a joint recommendation to make Baclor a state witness," he said.

Verzosa said the police had also launched a manhunt for a Hadji Alimudin in whose house the alleged getaway motorcycle was found over the weekend. The P150,000 had allegedly come from Alimudin who gave it to detained suspect Sajid "Danny" Sulaiman, who in turn passed it to Baclor who handed it over to Cuer.

Verzosa said the police were certain Alimudin could lead them to the mastermind in the killing.

"What we know is that Alimudin gave the money to Sulaiman. So it is very probable that he (Alimudin) knows the mastermind and who ordered the killing of Judge Gingoyon," Verzosa said.

He said Alimudin was included in the murder case filed in the provincial prosecutor's office in Imus.

Members of Task Force Gingoyon were working closely with the staff of the judge to look into recent cases he handled before he was killed, Verzosa said.

He said the police were convinced Gingoyon's killing was connected to his being a judge.

He said evidence and information gathered from witnesses and the suspects tended to show the mastermind was involved in a case the judge had tried. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Big C haunts Bislig City folk

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE BIG C HAS CREPT SILENTLY into the biggest city in Surigao del Sur. Playing host are the country's oldest paper milling plants, which are also the top polluters.

A study by the Bislig City health office and the UP Manila College of Public Health revealed a significant rise in cancer cases in Bislig and linked air pollution caused by the operations of Picop Resources Inc. (Picop) to the increase in respiratory ailments among children in the city.

"In Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, there is a rise in mortality from cancer of varied types. It has been steadily rising from being the fifth cause of mortality in the area in 2000 to the third highest cause of mortality in 2002," said the study.

The report titled "Environmental Health Assessment in Bislig City Phase I" was a two-year descriptive study to determine the existence of potential environmental risks that may be associated with current health conditions.

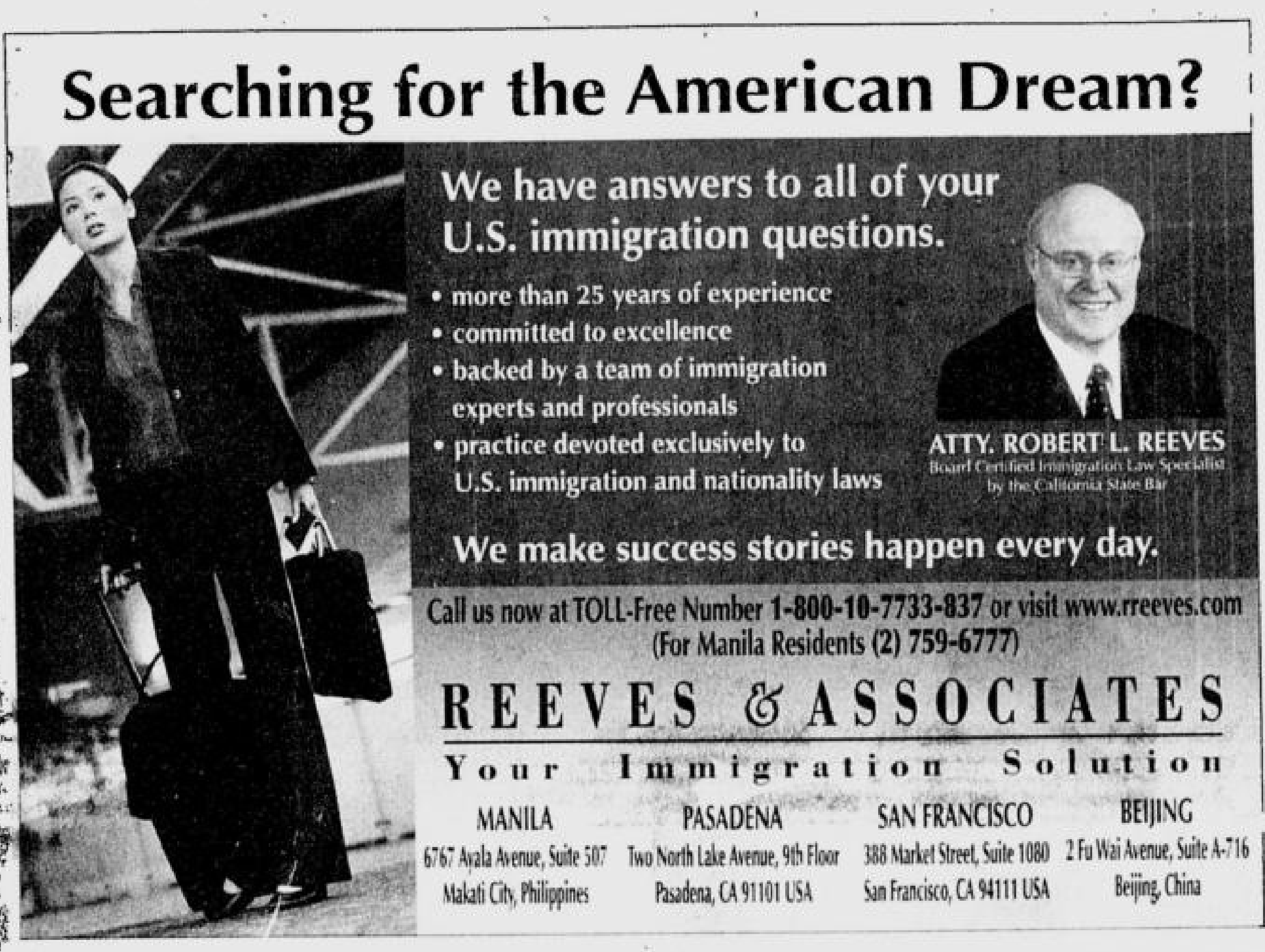
Bislig City health officer Dr. Brenda Estrella and professors Victorio Molina and Primavera Galinato of UP Manila conducted the study in 2003. Its initial findings were released last month.

According to the study, 32 percent or a third of the 238 cancer cases in Bislig were Picop employees, while 28 percent were housekeepers who lived within the vicinity of the plant.

It also noted that while breast cancer was the most common case in Bislig, lung cancer has been the top killer among all types of cancer in the last five years.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources named Picop as one of the top polluting firms in the country last year, but it had not stopped Picop from operating.

Picop president Teodoro Bernardino denied the report's claims, saying it was a misinformation campaign waged against the company for reasons he did not know.



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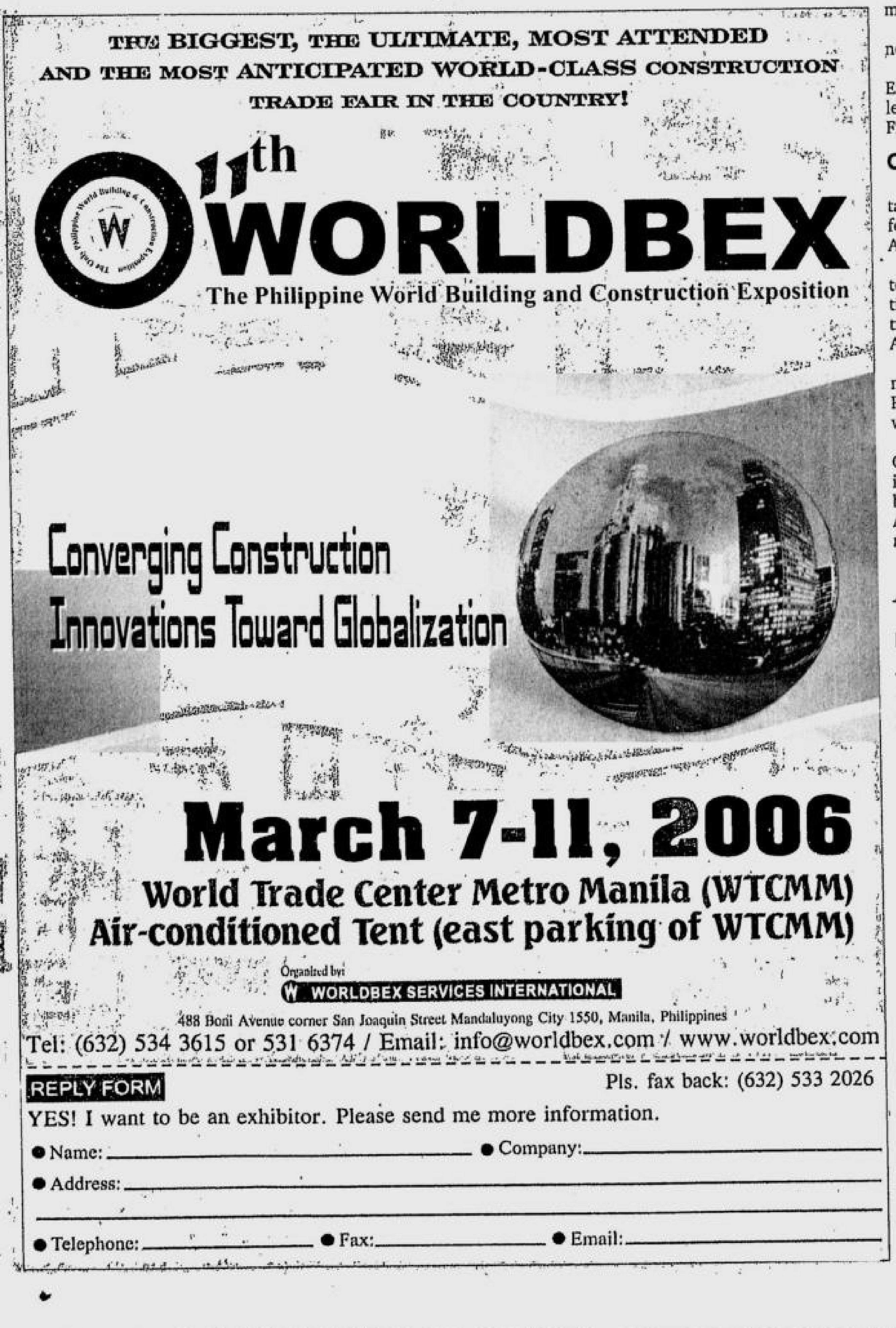

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Judge vows to issue arrest warrant vs GIs

By Tonette Orejas, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*
and Volt Contreras

THE JUDGE HANDLING THE RAPE CASE AGAINST four American soldiers said he would not be stopped from issuing arrest warrants by debates on who gets custody of the soldiers or even a Senate inquiry.

"If there is a need to issue arrest warrants, I will issue [them]. I can't be hamstrung," Judge Renato Dilag told the INQUIRER in a phone interview from Olongapo City yesterday.

Dilag, who presides over the regional Trial Court Branch 73 in Olongapo City, said the detention area should be agreed upon by both the Philippine and US governments according to a provision of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

While he took a hardline stance on the authority and functions of his court over the case, Dilag said he could not stop the Philippine government from proceeding with the negotiations.

They'll negotiate

"In fact, they will negotiate," he said, referring to the reiteration of the Nov. 16 request by the Department of Foreign Affairs to the US Embassy to hand over the servicemen.

Dilag said he was not going to wait for the results of the negotiations in issuing the warrants.

The four soldiers have been in the custody of the US Embassy in Manila since Nov. 3 or two days after they allegedly raped a 22-year-old woman at the Subic Bay Freeport.

Custody request

The DFA yesterday denied reports that Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo would use his trip to the US to lobby for the Philippines' pending request for custody of the four American Marines.

The department said Romulo was bound for Washington later this week to "give testimony" before an international arbitration body that is hearing the case of the controversial Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The DFA sought to clarify newspaper reports that Romulo would meet with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice concerning Manila's Nov. 16 custody request, to which the US Embassy in Manila has yet to respond.

The secretary is appearing before the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes regarding the Naia case, though not in his capacity as DFA chief but as then executive secretary of President Macapagal-Arroyo, said the DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque. (*See related story.*)

Romulo, Cruz to testify in US on Naia 3

TWO SENIOR PHILIPPINE CABINET ministers are to testify before the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes in Washington over the mothballing of a multi-million dollar international terminal at Manila airport, officials said yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz are to go to Washington shortly to testify in the case filed by Fraport AG after the government expropriated the airport terminal it helped build.

Romulo is being invited in his capacity as then-presidential executive secretary while Cruz is being invited in his capacity as former presidential legal counsel when the expropriation was ordered, presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye said.

Fraport AG owns 30 percent of the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) consortium which built the terminal. The rest of the consortium is composed of Filipino partners.

The terminal had been mothballed since 2003 when President Macapagal-Arroyo revoked Piatco's "build-operate-transfer" contract with the government on the grounds that certain terms were illegally renegotiated by her deposed predecessor Joseph Estrada in 1998.

Fraport AG then filed the arbitration case before the international center and demanded compensation of $465 million for the terminal project.

Piatco has a separate arbitration case in Singapore pending and has asked the government to reimburse the money spent to build the terminal. *AFP*

AFP denies stopping pilots' flight

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE (PAF) said yesterday that its leadership is not preventing its pilots from leaving.

"The Air Force is not preventing anyone from leaving the service as long as they follow the procedures and they have fulfilled their contracts," Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla, PAF spokesman, said.

The PAF said it understands if its pilots, who have a mandatory eight-year contract with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), decide to pursue better employment opportunities to ensure the future of their families.

For the AFP, a soldier has already served the country well during those eight years, Padilla said.

The PAF reacted to the INQUIRER's story on a resigning pilot's allegation that the military hierarchy was "sitting on" the resignation letters that he and more than 20 colleagues filed last year.

The pilot, who requested anonymity, said that the leadership returned some of the resignation letters for "unexplained reasons," describing it as a form of harassment.

Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, PAF commanding general, had denied the allegation, saying the resignation letters that were returned to the pilots who lacked the documents necessary to complete the processing of their papers.

This only means, the PAF said, the leadership has been acting on the resignation letters of the pilots.

'Tita Dulce' passes away

FORMER INQUIRER COLUMNIST TERESITA "Tita Dulce" A. Rodriguez passed away on Jan. 7. Her remains lie at Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. today to be followed by cremation at 11:30 a.m.

A literature graduate of the University of Santo Tomas, Rodriguez wrote an advice column for the Lifestyle section of the INQUIRER for many years. She was a public affairs officer at the United States Embassy and a consultant for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

She wrote a regular feature on legal stories for a magazine and contributed articles to other publications before joining the INQUIRER.

Rodriguez was born in Barili, Cebu. She was married to Josue C. Rodriguez (deceased). She is survived by her children Alma, Danny, Kayen, Dulce and Em-em; children-in-law Lemuel, Lorna, Ronald, Nito and Agnes; grandchildren Lisa, Melanie, Stephanie, Joshua, Trisha, Lia and Alyana; and the many people who considered her their second mother.

RP introduces art of 'hilot'

From page A1

its own medical tourism program in 2004.

Citing figures from the International Trade Center Geneva, Del Mundo pegged the global medical tourism industry at $20 billion.

In Asia, he said the industry was dominated by India, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Pinoy *hilot* falls under the program's wellness and health enhancement category which also includes spa, massage, naturopathy and detoxification. Tapped as centers for this program were The Farm in Lipa, Batangas, and the Detox Center in Subic, Zambales.

The local medical tourism program, scheduled for launching today at the Diamond Hotel in Manila, is expected to catch up with India and company in the next five years, according to Del Mundo.

He said it won't be difficult to invite foreign patients to come to the Philippines, since treatments here are cheaper than in other countries.

A comprehensive medical check-up would cost $5,000 in the United States, compared to only $500-$600 in the Philippines, he said in a lecture.

A complicated bone marrow transplant in the United States would cost $250,000, compared to only $20,000 here, he said.

Del Mundo said a plus factor would be the Filipinos' facility in English, on top of competent health professionals who were trained in the United States and Europe.

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Entrepreneurs overregulated, underfunded

From page A1

their way into the highest levels of government.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila does not believe, however, that a complete *laissez-faire* attitude is the solution to the problem. In some areas, he believes the government could do more to promote businesses that are counter-cyclical in nature.

Access to capital

He acknowledges that red tape is a problem, which needs to be addressed through a more streamlined regulatory process. In particular, Favila believes that most of the business permits and licenses, and the long queues for signatures of approval are redundancies.

More importantly, however, he believes the government should put its money where its mouth is by making it easier for would-be entrepreneurs to access much-needed capital.

"What we need to do is improve the distribution of funds to these businesses," he says, pointing out that, while the government has allocated P30 billion under the SME Unified Lending Opportunities for National Growth (Sulong) Program to promote entrepreneurial activity, the bulk of the fund remains undistributed and unused.

High interest rates

The distribution channels for these concessional loans are so poor that banks and other financial institutions have little choice but to charge higher interest rates long before the funds reach their intended beneficiaries, according to Favila, a former banker.

"So we have a loan that costs only 10-percent interest rate at the source, but ends up costing 28 percent when it reaches the end user," he laments. "This intermediation cost is just too high."

While this is better than the 1,040-percent annual rate charged by loan sharks, the interest rate is still high enough to deter micro and small enterprises, which often rely on loans of P150,000 or less, Favila says.

He also says that many Filipino entrepreneurs are afraid of "thinking big" and are often scared of further "exploiting" their ventures—thus capping their potential in the realm of mere "small businesses."

"I've encountered so many instances in trade fairs where foreign buyers put orders for one million units of a product, for example, which scares the producer because it's beyond his capacity," Favila says.

"They (local producers) need to be more ambitious and aggressive," he said.

Interior design

Despite these roadblocks—and despite the difficult times—Dee says several member firms of PCCI are doing well under the existing economic regime.

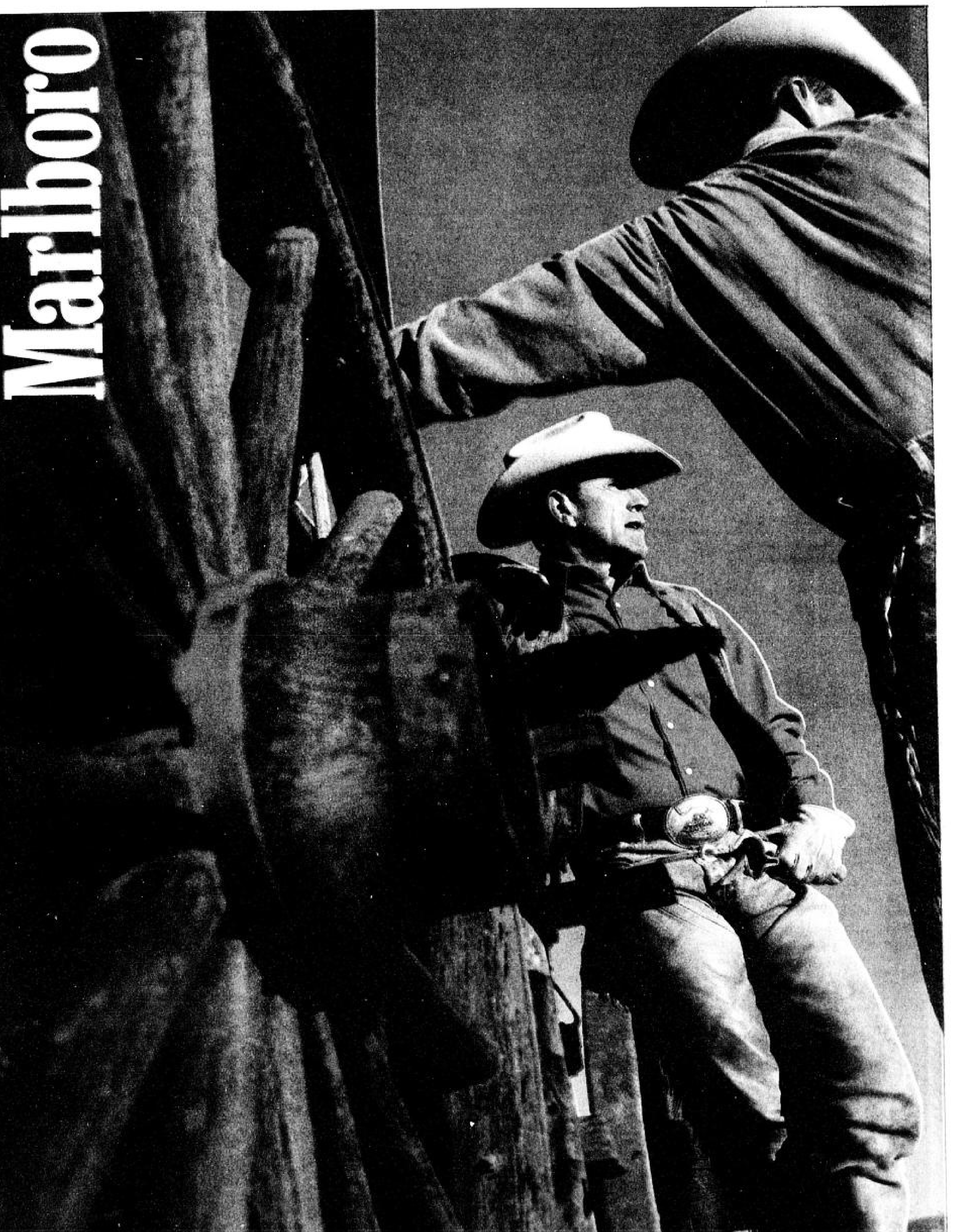
"Some of our members in the lending business are doing very well, especially since they're the last resort for funding for many people," he says.

Aside from pawnshops, cellular phone retailers and low-end food businesses, Dee says PCCI member-firms engaged in interior design are also raking it in.

"Many people cannot afford to buy new houses, so nowadays, they simply have their existing homes redesigned or renovated," he says.

Indeed, recent statistics from the labor department revealed that more Filipinos started their own businesses last year, along with those who went into "sidelines" to augment their incomes.

With the government predicting that economic growth this year will merely approximate last year's, it is safe to bet that counter-cyclical businesses that provide "sulit" products and services will continue to own a significant portion of the Filipino consumers' wallets.



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GMA rejects FVR quit call

From page A1

the fact that former President Ramos supports her in the full range of nation-building efforts," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement yesterday.

"But the President was elected to serve the country until 2010 and no one can take the mandate from her except the sovereign people through constitutionally sanctioned means," he said. "To talk about cutting the term of President Arroyo at this point would be premature."

Asked for comment, Ramos' media consultant Ed Malay said: "What can we do if that's what they want?"

He said Ramos was discussing with Speaker Jose de Venecia the issues surrounding Charter change and expected the talks in Ramos' Makati office to last well into the night.

A former Armed Forces chief of staff who served as President from 1992 to 1998, Ramos declared his support for Ms Arroyo last July, a move largely seen as critical in saving her 4-year-old presidency.

Exit scenario

This followed mounting calls for her resignation in the wake of allegations in the "Hello Garci" wiretaps that she stole the May 2004 presidential election.

Last July 8, 10 of Ms Arroyo's closest Cabinet secretaries resigned en masse and called on her to step down—a demand joined by ex-President Corazon Aquino and other close allies in business and politics.

Ms Arroyo survived an impeachment bid last September after her majority allies in the House of Representatives blocked it on a technicality. But coup rumors continued to swirl and opposition lawmakers had vowed to continue to investigate the allegations against her.

To provide what he regarded as a "graceful exit option" for Ms Arroyo, Ramos had proposed a shift to a parliamentary system and elections by May this year to put closure to the continuing political impasse.

On Monday, Ramos extended his timeline for the beleaguered Arroyo presidency, saying he had not factored in the calls for her impeachment when he made his original exit scenario. The time frame included amendments to the Constitution, their submission to a plebiscite and elections by June 30, 2007.

'Monumental blunder'

Ramos suggested that Ms Arroyo voluntarily step down and stand for election instead of continuing to hang on to power despite being hounded by a credibility crisis. He said his support of Ms Arroyo was "waning."

Last month, he slammed as a "monumental blunder" the recommendation by the Arroyo-created Consultative Commission to scrap the 2007 elections to pave the way for the shift to a parliamentary system by the 2010 balloting. He gave Ms Arroyo a New Year's Day deadline to declare her opposition to the poll cancellation, but he said on Monday the President had told him the matter was now before Congress and the people.

Ramos, who helped topple the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, is widely believed to be influential in the Armed Forces and his withdrawal of support for Ms Arroyo could tip the balance of power.

Bunye said moves to change the Constitution had already started with Congress now studying the recommendations of the Consultative Commission.

"We simply have to follow the train of these events to know and act upon the genuine sentiments and expectations of the people," Bunye said.

"If Congress says that there should be a change in term or a cut in term and that's ratified by the people, I think that will be followed by the President," Bunye told dzBB radio.

President will follow the law

"The President believes in the rule of law. And as such, if the Constitution is amended and this is prescribed, we believe that the President will follow the law," he said in Filipino.

Bunye also said that he was certain Ramos' suggestions would be tackled in the Jan. 14 national directorate meeting of the Lakas party, in which Ramos is chair emeritus and President Arroyo, the titular head.

He said that "political steps to determine the voice of the people" on Charter change were already in place and still needed to unfold.

These steps include the upcoming Jan. 24 meeting of the Council of State to be presided over by Ms Arroyo, the moves for Charter change through Congress, and the people's initiative being undertaken by local government officials, he said.

"We acknowledge former President Ramos' strong beliefs but we also know that he is an eminent leader who stands for rule of law and the democratic processes," Bunye said.

He said that Ms Arroyo was "presiding over a growing economy, a strong plan for social equity and a clear roadmap of political change." *AFP, AP*

IN THE KNOW

By the PDI Research

HERE'S former President Fidel Ramos' first exit scenario for President Macapagal-Arroyo, announced on July 7, to be implemented between July 2005 and May 2006:

July 2005: Congress convenes a Constituent Assembly that would draft a new Constitution to pave the way for parliamentary elections.

December 2005: A High Commission of independent leaders, following examination of the country's political and economic situation, proposes policy reforms to the Constituent Assembly. Congress is to create the commission.

Jan. 1, 2006: The Constituent Assembly comes up with a draft of a new Constitution.

Feb. 14: Draft Constitution is submitted to a plebiscite.

March: New Constitution takes effect.

May 15: Parliamentary elections.

DESPITE his waning support for her, President Fidel V. Ramos exchanges pleasantries with President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo during a diplomatic reception in Malacañang on Monday. The portrait of former President Corazon C. Aquino is in the background. EDWIN BACASMAS

After tea with FVR, Noli says he's open to shortened term

From page A1

paign to brief the people on the issues involved, and the holding of a referendum, De Castro said.

He said Ramos invited him to the dinner held at the latter's office at the Export-Import Bank in Makati. The meeting was arranged and attended by Ed Malay, Ramos' media and public relations consultant.

De Castro gave the INQUIRER a picture of their meeting—but had one "gripe."

"I was so hungry then because FVR said it was dinner but they only served tea," De Castro said with a laugh.

Told of De Castro's "complaint," Malay insisted that cookies were also served.

De Castro said that Ramos made the offer in the form of a "suggestion"—that he quit as Vice President to pave the way for the shift to a parliamentary form of government.

Malay, who was present at the dinner, confirmed this when asked by the INQUIRER.

De Castro also said it was Speaker Jose de Venecia, in another meeting prior to the dinner with Ramos, who offered him an automatic seat in the proposed parliament and a senior post in the Cabinet.

'I have good intentions'

Malay said he recalled De Castro telling Ramos about his meeting with De Venecia.

Ramos is chair emeritus of Lakas-CMD, De Venecia is its president and President Macapagal-Arroyo its chair.

"President Ramos said he had good intentions for the country and I believe that. He explained why I need to give way, but it was just a hint. But Speaker De Venecia directly told me that I will be made a member of parliament and of the Cabinet. Aren't they [Ramos and De Venecia] one and the same?" De Castro said, speaking in Filipino.

Tell the people

"Former President Ramos explained it to me nicely. In fact, whenever he comes back from abroad, he would give me a copy of his report about what he did and I would read and study it," De Castro said.

He said he just listened to what Ramos and De Venecia had to tell him and gave them no commitment at the time.

He said he studied and considered the offers later and found "nothing wrong with it."

"All political leaders, whether administration or opposition, we really should make sacrifices for the good of our country. The parliamentary system is okay if it would straighten out our country. All I ask is this should be explained to the people so that they can decide wisely, instead of only the leaders making a decision," De Castro said.

"Now, if it is OK with the people, who am I to block that. I have always said that I will not be an obstacle to any program that will be good for our country and is approved by the people," he said.

De Castro refused to comment on Ramos' latest statement giving Ms Arroyo until June 30, 2007, to step down and decide whether she would run for parliament under an amended Constitution. He said both leaders knew what they were doing.

De Castro said it was up to Ms Arroyo whether to accept or reject Ramos' deadline.

No to deadlines

"Even I don't want to be given a deadline. Didn't the Black and White also give me a deadline? But nothing came of that," De Castro said, referring to the civic group calling for his and Ms Arroyo's resignation.

"As far as I am concerned, there's nothing wrong with Mr. Ramos' call for political leaders, whether from the administration or the opposition, to make sacrifices by cutting short their term if this would lead to better governance and improved delivery of services to the people."

Others who met with Ramos during the holidays were Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Vidal, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, retired generals led by Ramon Montano, former Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco, Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte and Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista, and Bro. Mike Velarde of El Shaddai.

Opposition vows to revive impeach case against GMA

From page A1

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the opposition was distancing itself from the Ramos initiative. He said that preparations were being made to pursue the impeachment attempt Ms Arroyo's allies overwhelmingly quashed in September.

"We have already gathered documentary and testimonial pieces of evidence," said Escudero. He declined to elaborate. Last year's impeachment attempt failed miserably because of what was widely perceived as opposition incompetence.

Escudero indicated that additional impeachment charges would be lodged against the President.

The Constitution bans a second impeachment complaint within one year against Ms Arroyo. This second move could be started in June at the opening session of Congress.

Palace take on exit scenario

Officials of the ruling coalition in the lower chamber said Ms Arroyo should serve her mandated term until 2010—the planned start of the proposed parliamentary system.

Rep. Joey Salceda, an economic adviser to the President, offered what may well be the Palace thinking on the Ramos exit scenario for Ms Arroyo.

"She has the constitutional duty to lead until 2010 and the Constitution prescribes the means to cut her term short. Constitutional revision is not one of them. If those who write the Constitution should not benefit from it, conversely, no one should be diminished by it," Salceda said.

He said the President had "prior rights that may not be altered by a new Constitution."

"However, my personal reading is that she is predisposed to do what it takes to enable a shift to a unicameral parliament and a full liberalization of the economy," Salceda said.

"Even so, a smooth transition is of highest national interest and, as a basic management principle, an incumbent President must play a significant role of national leadership," Salceda said.

"We can't agree to a proposal to cut short her term for which she was legally elected," said House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, echoing the general sentiment of Ms Arroyo's allies in the chamber.

Rep. Prospero Pichay of Surigao del Sur questioned Ramos' right to issue an ultimatum to Ms Arroyo to end her term.

"What does he mean in saying, 'or else?' I don't think it is right for him to threaten the President in such a manner," said Pichay.

Cut talk, not term

Rep. Benasing Macarambon of Lanao del Sur said, "We urge FVR to just leave the term issue to the people to decide or through a system change via Charter change."

"Cut your talk, not her term," said House Deputy Majority Leader Abraham Mitra of Ramos' proposal.

Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano's take on Ramos was "the fascist martial law architect and psywar expert is fishing in two rivers to push Cha-cha," meaning Charter change.

"It appears that General Ramos is 100 percent sure that Cha-cha will pass through the needle's eye."

Senate Pro Tempore Juan Flavier said Ramos was taking a "personal" position. "It's not the party stand," said Flavier of the Lakas party of which Ramos is chair emeritus.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson dismissed Ramos' position as pure "political theater." Pimentel said it was a drama produced by House Speaker Jose de Venecia, directed by Ramos and starring Ms Arroyo. *With reports from TJ Burgonio, Norman Bordadora, Christian V. Esguerra, Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

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Palace in quandary: Scrap 2007 polls, or call plebiscite?

From page A1

"Things are very fluid but the President's main focus is to carry out reforms," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye when asked about the plans of the Arroyo administration for the next 18 months amid clashing proposals on how to solve the lingering political crisis.

While President Macapagal-Arroyo reiterated her plan to push for constitutional reforms at the annual vin d'honneur at the Palace on Monday night, she did not say how she would pursue this. She was also silent on how constitutional reforms would affect the elections scheduled for 2007.

Bunye said the President had left it entirely to Congress and the local government units to decide the best route to effect changes in the Constitution—either through a constituent assembly or constitutional convention or through a people's initiative.

Lakas meeting

Ms Arroyo has also been silent on the proposal of the Consultative Commission, whose members she personally chose, to scrap next year's elections to pave the way for Charter change.

Bunye said the issue would be settled at the meeting of the ruling Lakas-CMD meeting next week but he refused to say whether the President supported this position.

Businessman Raul T. Concepcion urged the President to declare that the 2007 elections would push through in order to start this early the much-needed overhaul of the Commission of Elections (Comelec) so it could regain its credibility and implement the computerization of the polls.

Bunye said that reforms in the Comelec would be tackled in due time and that these would be taken up in the Lakas and Council of State meetings this month.

So, can Ms Arroyo face the nation when she herself has not made up her mind on what to do in the next 18 months?

Cabinet revamp

Bunye replied: "The President has a clear road map and she is following this road map. She has divided the remaining period of the term under the present Constitution into several phases. The President is very much focused on this timetable."

Ms Arroyo has wavered not only on political reforms but also on her plan to revamp the Cabinet.

After Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced the President's plan to make changes in major and minor government posts, Bunye yesterday told reporters that the Cabinet had never discussed changes in key positions, specifically the plan to move Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes to the Philippine Embassy in Washington and to replace him at the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) with Antipolo Rep. Ronaldo Puno.

Bunye said naming Environment Secretary Michael Defensor as the new chief of staff was also not discussed by the Cabinet.

"Even in Baguio (where the President and Cabinet officials held office during the Christmas break), the revamp was not discussed. There were some names mentioned and these were limited to positions occupied in acting or OIC (officer in charge) capacity," he said.

Bunye noted that Defensor had repeatedly said nothing was final about his transfer to the Palace.

The press secretary said he was not aware of any discussions between Reyes and the President on changes at the DILG.

Among the key Cabinet positions, only the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the National Economic and Development Authority are headed by OICs.

In the loop

Bunye ignored questions on whether the President was backtracking on her plan to make major Cabinet changes.

He replied that, in general, the revamp would cover all government posts, including appointees in government financial institutions and government-owned and -controlled corporations.

Bunye denied that he was being kept in the dark on the plans of the President, who has not called a free-wheeling press conference with foreign and local media for nearly a year.

Bunye said he would continue to remain in the loop as far as the latest Malacañang developments were concerned despite moving to a new office outside the main Palace compound.

Although he is the designated spokesperson of the President, Bunye has been largely concerned with deflecting questions and protecting the President rather than shedding light on policy reforms and public issues.

299 new spans set record for bridge program

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S bridge Program (PBP) capped 2005 with the completion of 299 new bridges—the biggest number in a single year since it was launched 11 years ago, Malacañang said in a statement.

It said over 1,500 bridges had been completed under the PBP since it first started under the Office of the President. Implementation was later transferred to the Department of Public Works and Highways, which saw the completion of 1,128 bridges from then up to Dec. 15, 2005.

Citing DPWH records, Malacañang said the period 2001-2005 under Ms Arroyo was when 945 of the bridges were completed. It said the records likewise showed that as of Dec. 15, 2005, 110 more bridges were nearing completion.

Nationwide bridge building is part of the national infrastructure program of road networks designed to spur trade and economic progress in the country's remotest and poorest areas by providing links with urbanized and progressive areas.

Five types of bridge infrastructure initiatives fall under the PBP. These are:

- The "Fast, Versatile, Reliable Bridge Program" started in 1996 under President Fidel V. Ramos.
- The "Salam (Peace) Bridge Program" in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which employs over 1,000 former guerrillas of the Moro National Liberation Front.
- The "Barangay Bridge Program," which provides for 402 double-lane bridges.
- The "Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) Bridge Program," which provides for 526 more bridges in Mindanao.
- The "Countrywide Bridge Program," an extension of SZOPAD, and which provides for 200 additional bridges.

The PBP operates under a bilateral program between the Philippines and the United Kingdom, resulting in concessional financial arrangements backed by the British government's Export Credit Guarantee Department.

British engineering firm Mabey and Johnson Ltd. supplied the steel superstructures, technology and construction support.

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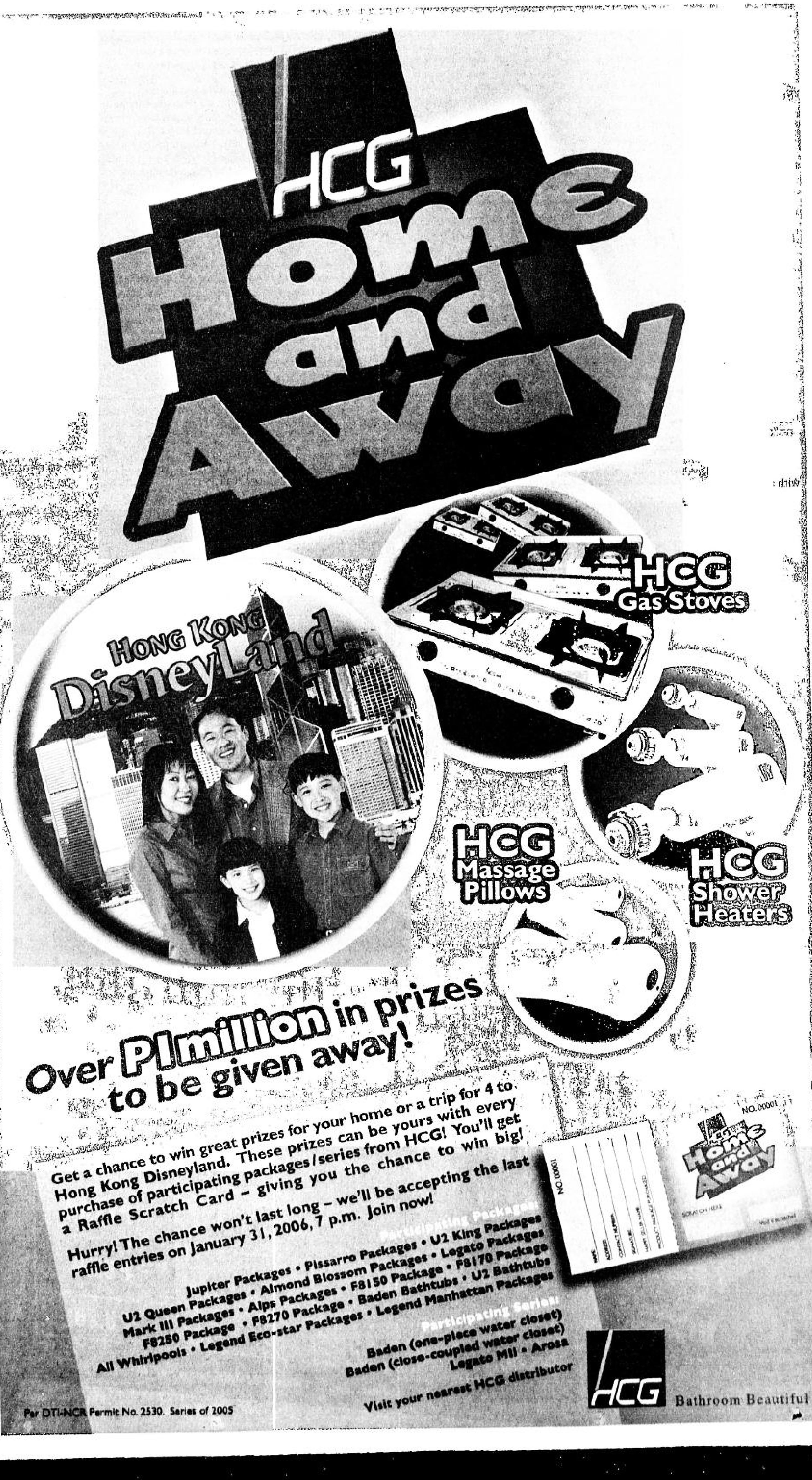

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Iraq war could cost US up to $3T, says study

WASHINGTON—THE IRAQ WAR WILL LIKELY COST THE UNITED States between $1 and $2 trillion, despite earlier assurances by the White House that these expenses would be manageable, according to a new study co-authored by a Nobel Prize-winning economist.

The research made public Monday by Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University, former chief economist at the World Bank, and economy professor Linda Bilmes of Harvard University, argues current official assessments of the war cost fail to consider key expenses likely to dog the US budget for years to come.

They include rising medical expenses to treat more than 16,000 wounded soldiers, accelerated depreciation of military hardware on the battlefield and the ripple effect on higher oil prices on the US economy, which in part can be blamed on the military venture.

"Even taking a conservative approach, we have been surprised at how large they are," Stiglitz and Bilmes wrote of the costs of the war. "We can state, with some degree of confidence, that they exceed a trillion dollars."

Lawrence Lindsey, a former chief White House economist, suggested in the run-up to the war that its costs could probably reach $200 billion. However, the number was immediately dismissed by other administration officials as a gross overestimation.

Throughout the study, the authors provide "conservative" and "moderate" estimates of expenses incurred by American society since the start of the war in March 2003.

According to a "conservative" assessment, the war will cost Americans at least $1.026 trillion. Under a "moderate" assessment, the expenses will top $1.854 trillion.

The United States has already spent $251 billion in cash on combat operations in Iraq since the invasion was launched, and continues to fund operations there at about $6 billion a month, according to congressional officials.

However, argue the economists, these figures fail to take into consideration disability payments to veterans over the course of their lifetime, the cost of replacing military equipment and munitions.

In addition, the cost of recruiting new soldiers has gone up dramatically, with the Pentagon paying recruitment bonuses of up to $40,000 for new enlistees and special bonuses and other benefits of up to $150,000 for current troops that re-enlist.

"Another cost to the government is the interest on the money that it has borrowed to finance the war," the authors point out.

They estimate that direct budgetary costs of the Iraq war to the US taxpayer will be in the range of $750 billion to $1.1 trillion, assuming that the administration of President George W. Bush begins to withdraw troops in 2006 and maintains a diminishing presence in Iraq for the next five years. *AFP*

Korean scientist's stem cell claims fake, cloned dog real

SEOUL—DISGRACED REsearcher Hwang Woo-suk did create the world's first cloned dog but he faked all of his landmark claims to have cloned human embryonic stem cells in a scam that deserves punishment, his university said Tuesday.

The latest revelations doomed the South Korean veterinarian's reputation as a pioneer in the human cloning field, already tainted by the finding that his claim in 2005 to have efficiently developed 11 patient-specific stem cell lines was false.

Hwang "did not have any proof to show that cloned embryonic stem cells were ever created," an investigating panel at Seoul National University said in a report Tuesday, disputing claims in Hwang's 2004 paper in the journal Science purporting that he cloned a human embryo and extracted stem cells from it.

However, the panel found that Hwang's claims last year to have created the world's first cloned dog were genuine.

Scientists hope to someday use human stem cells—master cells that can grow into any body tissue—to cure diseases such as Alzheimer's and diabetes.

Creating stem cells genetically matched to a specific patient would be a breakthrough because they would not be rejected by the patient's immune systems. But despite years of research, Hwang was the only person to claim success in extracting the cells from an embryo.

"The 2004 paper was written on fabricated data to show that the stem cells match the DNA of the provider although they didn't," the report said.

The reputation of Hwang—once dubbed "The Pride of Korea"—has eroded steadily in recent months with increasing questions about his work. *AP*

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WORLDBRIEFS

Blasts kill 28 Iraqi policemen

BAGHDAD—At least 28 policemen were killed and 25 injured Monday when twin suicide bombers attacked Iraq's interior ministry where ministers and the US ambassador were attending a parade to mark Police Day. The Iraqi branch of al-Qaida claimed responsibility for the attack in an Internet message. Both bombers wore police uniforms. Guards at the ministry gate opened fire on one of them, but the bullets detonated the explosives strapped to his body, a security official said. **AFP**

Iran to resume nuclear research

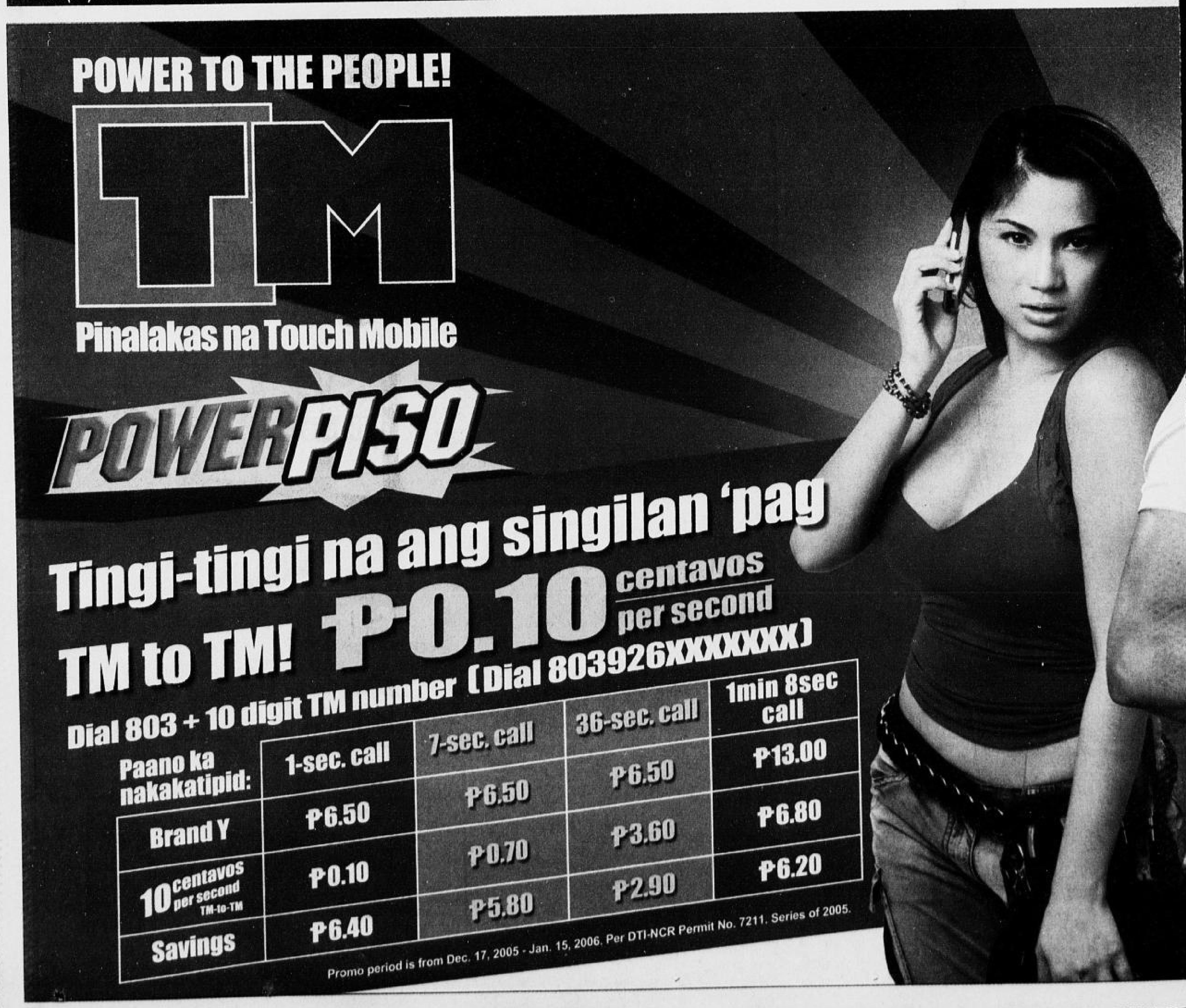
TEHRAN—Iran said it would resume nuclear fuel research on Monday, triggering fresh Western warnings that Tehran could face sanctions and wreck dialogue to end a dispute over its controversial nuclear program. The US, which accuses Tehran of seeking to build nuclear weapons, reiterated that Iran may be referred to the UN Security Council. But Russia said dialogue was still the only way forward. **AFP**

77 Japanese infected with bird flu

TOKYO—Up to 77 people in Japan — most of them chicken farm workers — may have been infected with a mild form of bird flu, a news report said Tuesday, citing government officials. The sufferers came from two prefectures — Saitama and Ibaraki — outside of Tokyo, Kyodo News agency reported. Officials at the Health Ministry refused to immediately confirm the report. Kyodo said the 77 showed evidence of antibodies to the H5N2 virus, which is weaker than the deadly H5N1 form. **AP**

US admits opening private mail

WASHINGTON—US officials can open personal mail arriving from abroad as part of the fight against terrorism, and do so when they deem it necessary to protect the country, a Customs and Border Protection spokesperson said. "Customs and Border Protection is charged with making sure that terrorists and terrorists' weapons don't enter the country," said Suzanne Trevino, a spokesperson for the customs agency. **Reuters**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Sharon responds to stimuli

JERUSALEM—PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon's medical team pushed forward with efforts to bring him out of an induced coma Tuesday, a day after reporting slight progress in the Israeli leader's recovery from a debilitating stroke.

Meanwhile, an Israeli newspaper raised new questions about whether doctors' errors might have contributed to last Wednesday's stroke.

The Haaretz daily said Sharon was suffering from a brain disease, called cerebral amyloid angiopathy, that, in combination with blood thinners he was taking, could have increased his risk for stroke, the newspaper said.

If doctors had known about the condition, they would not have prescribed the blood thinners, the paper said, quoting an unidentified member of Sharon's medical team. However, the report said the condition sometimes can be diagnosed only after a brain hemorrhage.

Sharon was given the blood thinners after suffering a mild stroke on Dec. 18, but the brain condition was discovered only after the second stroke, Haaretz said.

Hadassah Hospital spokesperson Yael Bossem Levy declined to comment on the report. "We are busy treating the prime minister and fighting for his life and nothing else," she said. *AP*

Bird flu outbreak in Turkey worsens

DOGUBAYAZIT, TURKEY—TURKEY SAID ON Monday 14 people had been confirmed with bird flu infections, but UN health experts said there was no evidence the virus had changed to become more dangerous to people.

The United Nations' World Health Organization said the victims appeared to have caught the H5N1 bird flu virus directly from infected birds, as has been happening in southeast Asia.

"The total number of cases in our country is 14 confirmed by laboratory tests, and out of those 14, three children have died," Turkey's Health Minister Recep Akdag told a news conference.

Speaking in Dogubayazit, the village in rural eastern where the children died, Akdag appealed to people to stay away from poultry, and to especially watch children.

In Ukraine, health officials said Tuesday they had confirmed another outbreak of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu in three poultry farms on Ukraine's southern Crimean peninsula.

The virus has so far been identified in 14 Crimean villages and authorities have already destroyed more than 70,000 domestic fowl. No human cases have yet been recorded in Ukraine.

China confirmed its eighth human infection from bird flu on Monday, the latest victim a 6-year-old boy from the central Hunan province who is being treated in hospital.

Indonesia said local tests showed a 39-year-old man had died from the virus earlier this month after contact with dead chickens. If confirmed, it would be the 12th death in Indonesia.

The newest figures mean that H5N1 avian influenza has killed at least 84 people since 2003 and infected more than 150—and with the outbreak in Turkey there are signs it could spread into mainland Europe.

While the WHO says there is no evidence so far to demonstrate human transmission, experts fear the H5N1 strain will evolve just enough to allow it to pass easily from person to person.

If it does, it could cause a catastrophic pandemic, killing tens of millions of people, because humans lack immunity to it.

"The initial investigation has found no evidence that the virus has increased its transmissibility or is spreading from person to person," WHO said on its Web site, http://www.who.int.

"Most persons under investigation are children, often from the same family, and almost all have a documented link to dead or diseased poultry." WHO experts in Turkey echoed the comments.

"At the moment there is no element in this village indicating human-to-human transmission. It's typically similar to what we have seen so far (in Asia)," Guenael Rodier, heading the WHO's mission to Turkey, told Reuters Television.

Thirteen children were among 23 people also undergoing tests for bird flu in Istanbul, a teeming city of 12 million which is the country's commercial hub and gateway to Europe from Asia.

Health experts said more cases may be reported as worried Turks show up at clinics with flu-like symptoms.

"People are very much more aware of H5N1 and the implications of contact with sick and dying birds," said Dr. Nancy Cox, an influenza expert at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cox said it was not clear why there should be such a cluster of cases in Turkey.

"We know that there is a seasonality to influenza in birds and just as there a seasonality in humans where the viruses circulate in the wintertime in the cooler temperatures," Cox told Reuters. *Reuters, AP*

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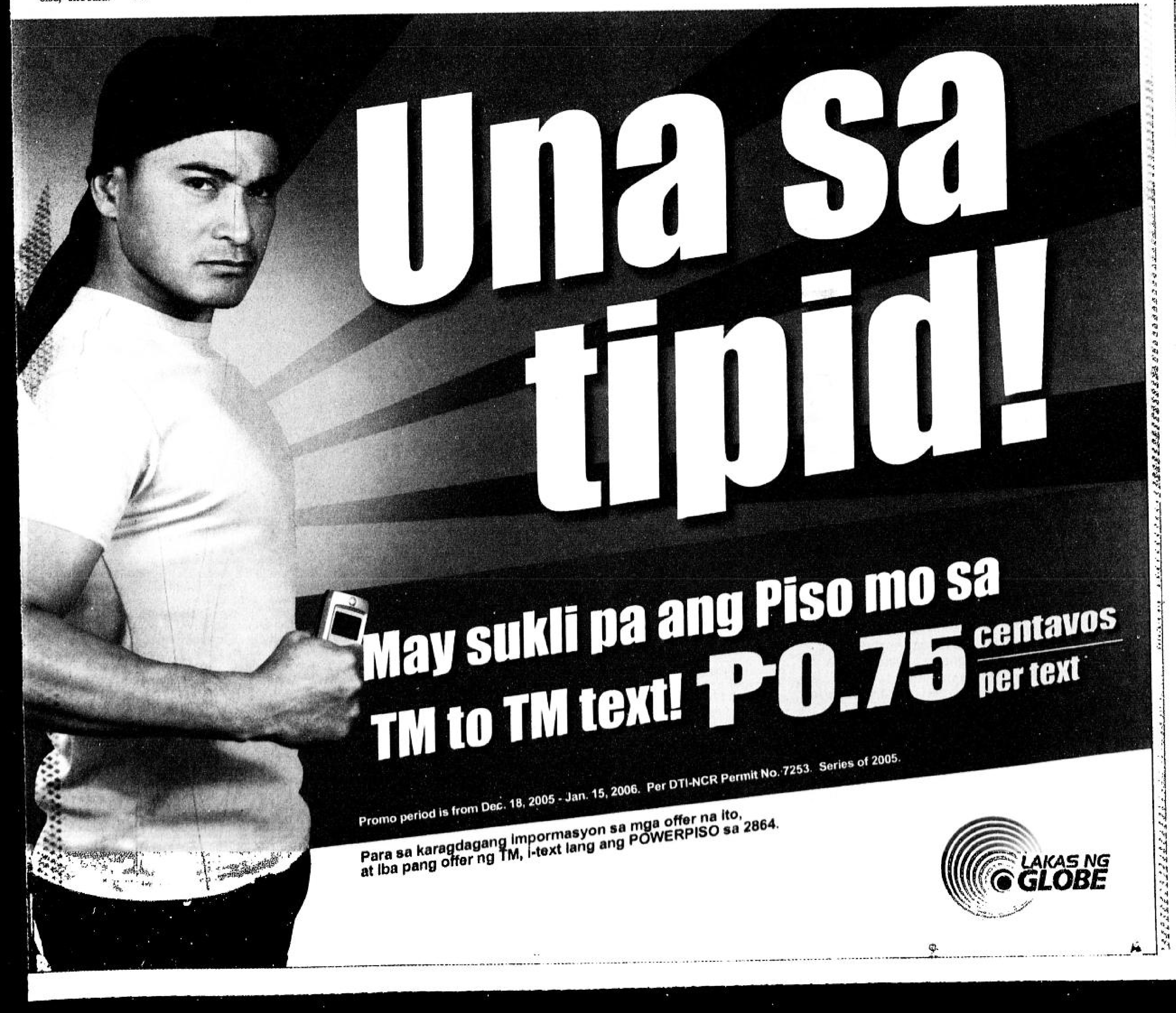
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OPINION

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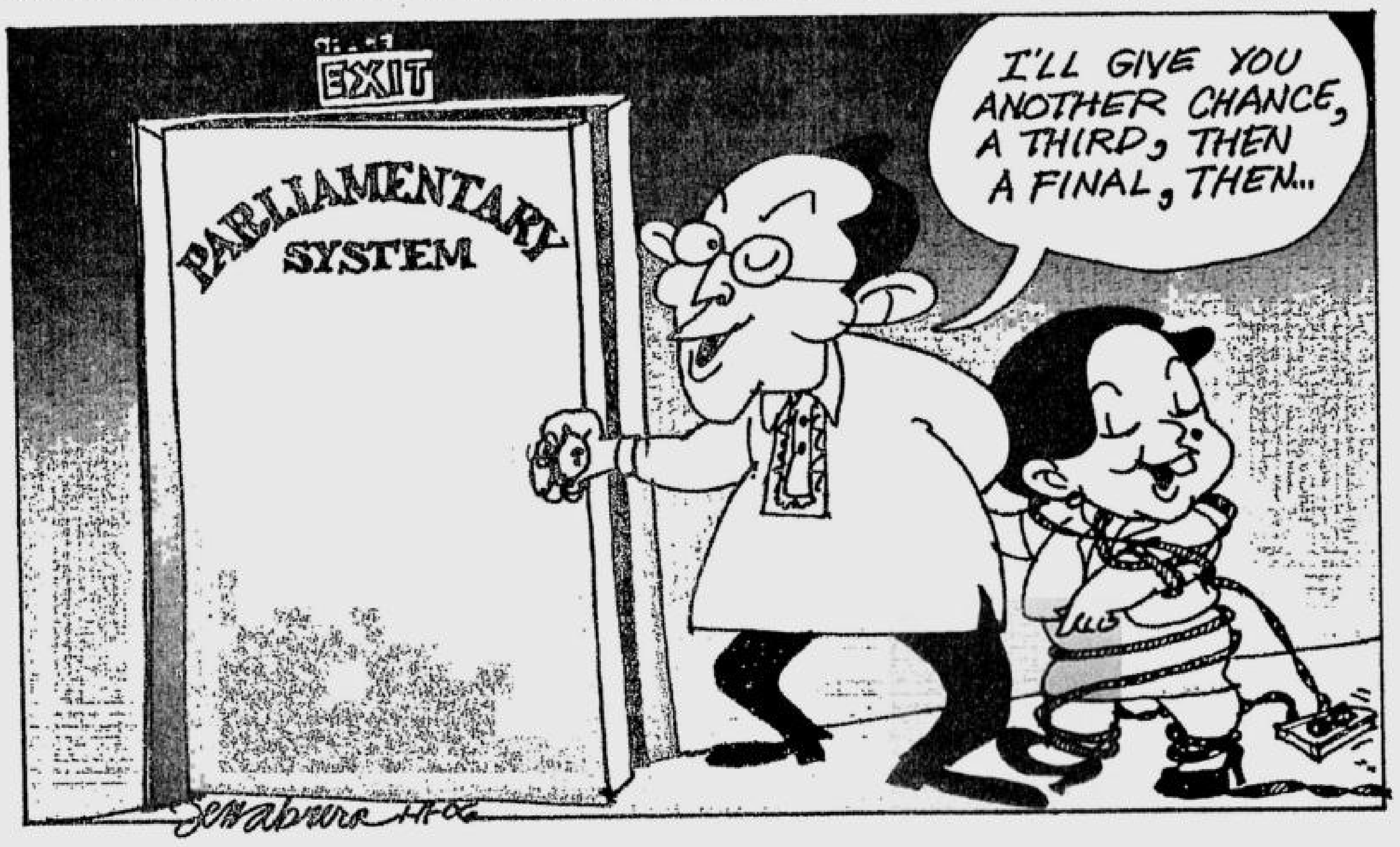
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EDITORIAL

THE COUNCIL OF STATE IS A VENERABLE AND worthy institution, dating back to Oct. 16, 1918, and an important feature of every presidency from Manuel Quezon's to Diosdado Macapagal's. President Corazon Aquino's decision to reestablish the Council of State was a good idea that foundered on the 20 years of institutional inertia created by Ferdinand Marcos' systematic dismantling of so many traditions. Presidents who reached political maturity during the Marcos era, such as Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, found the idea of a Council of State alien. As President Macapagal-Arroyo does, to a certain extent.

The old Council of State was distinguished as a nonpartisan means for presidents to consult with senior statesmen and private citizens on both a regular and extraordinary basis. After the stillborn initiative of the Aquino presidency, Ms Arroyo attempted to revive the council but bloated its membership when previously it was designed to be a flexible mechanism for presidential consultation. Added to the bloating of the council was the maladroit timing of its restoration, when Ms Arroyo was already besieged, had failed in her efforts to reach out to the opposition, and had begun to exhibit an enduring characteristic of her presidency: an eagerness to co-opt, and not necessarily listen. The late Raul Roco, for one, reacted with thinly veiled contempt for the nakedly partisan political timing of it all.

Which is why today, former President Fidel V. Ramos (who much preferred the National Security Council mechanism, an imitation of American practice established by President Carlos P. Garcia) grumbled to the press that the last time the Council of State met, it was a tiny meeting composed of himself, former President Aquino, President Macapagal-Arroyo, the executive secretary and Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr.—as if that assemblage was incapable of providing the President with necessary advice. Now Ramos has seized upon the Council of State as a means of getting people to sit around the table.

A powwow of political bigwigs isn't necessarily a bad thing, and indeed could be a good opportunity for Ms Arroyo to have open and frank discussions about the direction of the country. That is, if it were explicitly stated as having that purpose. Early on, however, after the administration floated the idea of convening the council, it was marred by all sorts of rather ludicrous non-issues, such as whether Ramos would preside or not (the President of the Philippines always presides, not former presidents), and whether Joseph Estrada would be welcome or not (either he should have been invited, or clearly told he wouldn't be welcome). Not to mention the extremely pregnant silence maintained by Aquino toward the whole idea. If two out of three of the former presidents stay away from the meeting, it bodes ill for the effectiveness of the council.

Since politics has clouded what should be the statesmanlike purpose of the Council of State, the timing of the meeting necessarily requires attention. The Jan. 24 meeting was announced weeks ago, and yet the list of those to be invited and the agenda for the meeting were only announced yesterday—and vaguely at that. Which begs the question of what, exactly, the meeting is supposed to accomplish, other than provide a photo opportunity to show that all roads lead straight to Malacañang. And since timing in politics is everything, now that politics has reared its ugly head with regard to the council, we have to wonder at the convenience of the chosen date.

On Jan. 23, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) will meet with the Catholic bishops. On Jan. 24, the day the Council of State meets, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines will begin meeting, inevitably devoting much of its energies to reevaluating the position it took concerning the political crisis. The AMRSP meeting with the bishops is highly significant, because part of the fallout from the political crisis has been a wide divergence of views between the clergy and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. This can't fail to inspire concern in the administration. And what better way to blunt the impact of these meetings than to shine the spotlight on politicians meekly going to participate in window dressing for the administration?

MMDA can still arrest erring drivers—SC

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THERE IS NOW ANARCHY AND CHAOS IN the streets of Metro Manila because of the misinterpretation and wrong reporting of a Supreme Court decision that purportedly stripped the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) of the authority to enforce traffic rules and regulations. As a result, drivers refuse to obey MMDA traffic enforcers and even insult and taunt them. This has forced the traffic enforcers to suffer inferiority complexes. So much so that some of them shy away from drivers. Result: anarchy in the streets.

These drivers could face hefty fines for traffic violations, and even for resisting arrest. For the reports that the MMDA can no longer enforce traffic rules and arrest erring drivers are wrong, MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando told the Kapihan sa Manila last Monday.

Supreme Court spokesperson Ismael G. Khan Jr. has sent a letter to newspapers to clarify the decision, dated April 15, 2005, in MMDA vs. Garin, and affirmed in its Dec. 5, 2005 resolution denying the MMDA's motion for reconsideration. The letter belied reports that the Court's decision stripped the MMDA of its power to apprehend traffic violators and prohibited MMDA traffic enforcers from confiscating drivers' licenses. Actually, this latter issue (confiscation of licenses) is already moot as the MMDA has already stopped doing that since its adoption of the Metropolitan Traffic Ticketing (MTT) scheme, Khan said.

"What the Court actually held," Khan explained, "was that the MMDA's power to confiscate and suspend or revoke drivers' licenses must be in the enforcement of a valid law, ordinance, or regulation arising from a legitimate source. Thus, where there is a traffic law or regulation validly enacted by the legislature or those agencies to whom legislative powers have been delegated, the petitioner is not precluded and in fact is duty-bound to confiscate and suspend or revoke drivers' licenses in the exercise of its mandate of transport and traffic management, as well as the administration and implementation of all traffic education programs," said the Court. Indeed the Court stated that Sec. 5 (f) imposes on the MMDA the duty to enforce existing traffic rules and regulations.

"The reason for the above ruling is, as pointed by the court, because the MMDA under its Charter has not been delegated police power by Congress. (But) the term 'police power' (here) does not refer to the power to catch and arrest those who have violated the law (activities many associate with police officers) but, as defined in the Garin decision, 'the power vested by the Constitution in the legislature to make, ordain and establish all manner of wholesome and reasonable laws, statutes, and ordinances... ' Simply put, while the MMDA can enforce traffic laws, ordinances and regulations, it is devoid of the power to promulgate the same since it does not have police power." The decision was penned by Associate Justice Minita Chico-Nazario.

* * *

It appears that the government is very slow in enforcing laws against white-collar crime and bringing to justice its perpetrators. Investors are being bilked of millions of pesos by companies that take advantage of the laxity of the laws and their enforcement. The people behind the pyramid scam of a few years ago are still free and the investors have not recovered even part of their money. Most of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and bank personnel who connived to deposit taxes in their own bank accounts and then withdrew all the funds are also free as birds. The cases filed against the people behind the tax-credit scam are being dismissed one after another. It looks like the officials responsible for the pre-need scandal, like the College Assurance Plan and Pacific Plans, will get off easily. And a number of real estate developers have not delivered the titles to lots or condominium units that have already been fully paid to their buyers. The courts are full of estafa cases filed by buyers against officials of these real estate companies.

During the early 1970s, a number of landowners lost their land to banks that foreclosed loans to developers who had mortgaged the land as collateral. The developers failed to finish the development and transfer the torrens titles to fully paid buyers. The buyers lost their units and the landowners lost their land, but the developers got the money, and although they're facing charges, they're also free as birds when they should be jailbirds now.

The latest to be sued is the new owner of a 48-story tower in Ortigas Center. The tower, with a helipad at the top, is now the imposing headquarters of a bank. It took over the tower from the developer. One of its top officials boasted recently to a magazine journalist that its net income for the first half of 2004 had already breached the P1-billion mark, a feat that placed it among the Top 10 Best Managed Companies in the Philippines.

Everything seems to be coming up roses for this relative newcomer in the field of giants. Except for one thing: It forgot vital obligations of the developer, such as the delivery of TCTs of unit buyers who have fully paid for them, including the supplier of materials and services for the building who are being paid with completed office or condo units. Ditto for the owner of the land.

The unit buyers, landowner and contractor have filed estafa cases against officers of the bank. The preliminary investigation by the fiscal's office begins day after tomorrow.

The moral of this story is: If you are investing or buying residential lots or condo units by installment, choose your developers very well.

Encounters

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

A FRIEND OF MINE ASKED ME IF I HAD ANY thoughts about initiatives that could help bridge the divide between Muslims and Christians in this country. He and some colleagues were looking for instances of dialogue, or cultural encounters, that promoted peace, or curbed hostilities, between those warring factions.

I said half in jest that my friend would do better looking for those instances not in the south but right here in the city. As far as I knew, I said, the perfect model for Christian-Muslim harmony was to be found in Quiapo. Nothing spoke of the heights of mutual tolerance than the Quiapo Church, bastion of Catholicism, on one side of the street coexisting with the Muslim mosque, citadel of Islam, on the other side of it.

Thinking about it later, however, I realized it wasn't a joke at all. A perfectly serious case could be made for it. The "taming of the Moro quarter" in Quiapo should make for an interesting study, academic or otherwise, offering as it does a wealth of insights into how to turn swords into plowshares.

Not too long ago, the place was a virtual no-man's land. During Alfredo Lim's time, in particular, the "Muslim center," as it was often referred to, which is that side of Quiapo opposite the Quiapo Church, past the underpass, all the way to Arlegui, Globo de Oro, and the other small clogged streets that run through there like the arteries of someone badly needing a heart bypass, was whispered with the same awe and dread as "Tondo" in the 1960s. It was not uncommon to find "salvage" victims there. Nor was it uncommon to find close encounters of the bloody kind between cops and robbers there, the robbers disappearing into the folds of the place as into a foggy redoubt and the cops refusing to follow. Many a cop that did so failed to come out alive.

That at least was the image that gripped the public mind, aided in no small way by the tabloids that screamed the mayhem in bold headlines. Until a few years ago, vestiges of that unsavory reputation still clung to that place. When I told people that the cheapest place to buy DVDs was in Quiapo, specifically the Muslim area, some of them were aghast and marveled at my intrepidness in venturing that far afield. I assured them there was nothing fearful about the place, it was nowhere near the wild frontier they supposed it to be. The wariness has disappeared almost completely today. The place is still a sprawl, dirty and grimy, and muddy on rainy days, but it is also home particularly on weekends to Pajeros and CRVs, parked on its periphery, in the area under the Quiapo Bridge. Or what used to be called "Isle de Tulle," the Frenchified "*ilalim ng tulay*," or under the bridge.

What had wrought this amazing transformation? The DVDs of course.

Or more accurately the "pirated DVDs," which can be bought for a song in those parts, or however P50 counts these days. The periodic raids of Edu Manzano's henchmen notwithstanding, which look more and more like an elaborate ritual taken for PR purposes, the DVD market grows by leaps and bounds. The fringes are caught up in it too and keep expanding. The downside I leave the believers in IPR to argue. The upside is that you find no quarrels between the inebriated crowd that heaves the Black Nazarene through the streets on its feast day shouting pious litanies and the sober one loudly chanting praises to Allah particularly during the lean and hungry days of Ramadan. If that isn't tolerance, I don't know what is.

Two things I gather from this, which could have some bearing on the work of peace advocates. One is that the presumed animosity between Christians and Muslims in this country is more imagined than real. I don't know how it is in Muslim Mindanao, I suspect it is just as exaggerated. The animosity hasn't seeped into the level of the man in the street. I do know that in the Visayas, there are still numerous reminders of the Moro piratical raids. Tagbilaran, the capital of Bohol, as I learned some years ago, means "tago B'laan," or to hide from the pirates. I do know that the Feast of the Cross in some parts of Leyte is related to the many miracles the Cross of Christ apparently worked to protect Visayan communities from the Moro pirates in Spanish times.

But I don't know that the animosity is active today among ordinary folk. The distrust seems to have less to do with the idea of a Moro stabbing you in the back than with him stabbing you in the pocket. Courtesy of all those jokes about the Moro trader, but which are no more and no less than the jokes about the sly Chinese and shrewd Bombay.

The second and more important thing you can glean from the experience is that you turn people into stakeholders, or give them a stake in peace, you get peace. People who have a source of livelihood will not imperil their source of livelihood. Today, the barangay council in the Muslim quarter zealously keeps the peace there, fearful that any mugging or bloodletting could ward off the droves of visitors that regularly descend on it. Of course some people will argue that pirated DVDs, which for reasons I have yet to fathom have become a Moro franchise—they're the ones selling the thing even in Baguio, or so someone tells me—are not unlike Colombian cocaine. And some will say the pirated DVDs suggest that Moros have not gotten over their time-honored skullduggery. I disagree completely, though I'll leave my arguments there for another day. Suffice it for me to say that the only thing that suggests skull and crossbones from where I stand are the periodical raids of Edu's men which take on the aspect of Francis Drake's one-eyed and toothless men looting the loot-laden Spanish galleons.

By the way, have you seen the early works of Ingmar Bergman....?

The Ramos ultimatum

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL RAMOS HAS KEPT the threat of making a break with President Macapagal-Arroyo dangling over her head by extending his deadline for her to step down to June 30, 2007.

Ramos' press conference on Monday, in which he sought to explain the Jan. 2 meeting with Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Vicente Sotto III, added greater uncertainty to his fragile alliance with the President. Worse, it fueled doubts over how much longer the President can stay in office with this new pressure coming from Ramos.

Although the clamor for her resignation from the streets has waned, the new Ramos ultimatum has emerged as the most dangerous threat to end her presidency prematurely since the crisis of July 2005, when her government stood on the edge of collapse following intensified street actions and the defection of key Cabinet members.

The danger is that Ramos' pressure could revive the flagging street action and encourage other hostile initiatives, including a new impeachment complaint after the dismissal of the impeachment case in the House of Representatives last year.

The Ramos press conference clarified a few things:

First, he gave the President until June 30, 2007 to make the "supreme sacrifice" of resigning and deciding whether to stand for parliament under an amended constitution.

Second, Ramos admitted that his support for the President was "still waning," but at the same time repeated his call, made in July 2005, that the President make the "supreme sacrifice" of cutting short her term, in order to put in place the elements of a parliamentary system.

He said Ms Arroyo "should resign by June 30, 2007, and declare her plans whether to continue in office ... by running as member of parliament."

Third, last month, Ramos warned that he would withdraw support for the President unless she declared by New Year's Day that she would reject the proposal of the Constitutional Consultative Commission to scrap the 2007 elections and let her to stay in office until 2010. He condemned the proposal as a "monumental blunder."

The failure of the President to heed the demand prompted Ramos to shift ground and issue a more flexible deadline, which would allow him, as well as the President, to save face. His new demand took him out of a head-on collision with the President.

Fourth, Ramos made clear it was Drilon and Sotto who initiated the Jan. 2 meeting in his office at Urban Bank, and who asked him if he was willing to enter into a "covenant" with former Presidents Joseph Estrada and Corazon Aquino to unseat Ms Arroyo. Ramos spurned the proposal, saying he "would not enter into any covenant with .... Estrada until there is closure on his case before the Sandiganbayan (since) I might unnecessarily influence the court." It was not clear why he was not keen on an alliance with Ms Aquino, whom he defended against nine coup attempts.

It is clear that Ramos is not playing other people's games and is not involved in a grand conspiracy to unseat Ms Arroyo. Instead, he has his own framework for change. In his new deadline, Ramos stuck to his original framework, which unveiled on July 8, 2005 when he came to the rescue of the President whose Cabinet was disintegrating and who was then uncertain about the support of the Catholic Church hierarchy.

His original timetable called for the convening of a constituent assembly in January, a plebiscite in February, a new Constitution by March, and election of members of parliament in May, with a new parliament in place by June—all crammed in 2006. This timetable involves a hurried shift to a parliamentary system by June 30, 2007. This framework was prepared like a precise military operation with specific objectives and time schedules.

This is not how the President wanted things to develop. To buy time, she seized the initiative by convening the Consultative Commission to prepare a draft constitution and by calling for the transformation of the two Houses of Congress into a constituent assembly to draft proposals for constitutional amendments. Her move only stiffened opposition to the constituent assembly in the Senate, which favors a constitutional convention. Worse, the President jumped the gun by sending the Consultative Commission report to Congress, including the outrageous proposal for the cancellation of the 2007 election which would allow her to stay in office until 2010.

With all these moves, the President dug herself into a deeper hole and caused further erosion of badly need political support, including the strategic support of Ramos.

The extension of Ramos' deadline has given the President a little more space to maneuver and some flexibility to consider the Ramos plan, which may be one of the few options available to her to make a face-saving exit and even get a second crack at power through the shift to the parliamentary system.

The parliamentary option offers a political safety net for a soft landing of the Arroyo regime. It also offers an answer to the issue that has bedeviled the resignation movement: a credible alternative to her in an orderly transitional framework acceptable to most, through a clean sweep in a fresh general election.

There is a developing consensus for the President to cut short her term as a precondition for the restoration of political stability. The problem lies in the mode of change.

What if the President rejects the second Ramos plan? Ramos' credibility is on the line. He has made a bold gamble that could make him lose face. What would be his next card? Are they nearing the point of no return?

'Feeling at home'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"FEELING AT HOME" IS A TERM OFTEN USED derisively to refer to people who make themselves too comfortable while visiting a place where they don't really belong.

Is a daughter's boyfriend slouched on your couch with his feet perched on your coffee table? "Feeling at home," you might sniff, with a raised eyebrow. Does a female employee make it a habit to shuffle about the office in house slippers? "Feeling at home *ka yata*," her boss might chide her.

I don't know what the headline writer had in mind in fashioning this head to a story on how the first family was "settling in" at Malacañang: "Arroyos now more at home in Palace." Was it simply a description of the situation, or a sardonic take on signs of how the Arroyos are increasingly "feeling at home," just when calls are mounting for President Macapagal-Arroyo to vacate the Palace?

Six months after the President announced that she was sending most of the men in her family on "exile" after they were linked to the *jueteng* racket, First Gentleman Mike Arroyo is now reported to be moving into a new office closer to Malacañang so he could be "nearer" his wife—and by implication the corridors of power.

Last Monday, too, "First Grandchild" Mikaela Arroyo was spotted riding her pony on the Malacañang grounds, stealing the thunder of press coverage from her lola. The little girl, so the news report said, seemed to be taking to her father, Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo's love for horses, since he is also into the very expensive hobby of horse breeding. One happy family, indeed. *At feeling at home pa!*

* * *

OF course, as citizens we should hope our President and her family "feel at home" in Malacañang, since this is where the Chief Executive is expected to reside. But the story of their cocooning in the presidential palace makes for irony given that, one, she has yet to put to rest accusations that she made her way to Malacañang by electoral fraud; and two, even perceived allies are now asking her to step down before her term ends in 2010.

Former President Fidel V. Ramos, widely acknowledged as the President's "last-minute savior" last July when a series of resignations and public declarations threatened to bring moves for her ouster to a "tipping point," has joined those clamoring for her resignation.

To be sure, there's no reason the President should feel at all obligated to heed any deadline issued by a predecessor. Aside from proverbial "moral ascendancy," FVR really has no authority to compel GMA to step down by June 30 next year. But the joining of Ramos, who still wields considerable political clout, with civil society groups and the political opposition calling for the President's early resignation means Ms Arroyo cannot so easily ignore the looming deadline and the rising public dissatisfaction with her performance in office.

* * *

STILL, no matter how unhappy one is with the President, and how strongly one believes in her culpability, given the "testimony" of the "Hello Garci" tapes, there's still something disturbing about the audacity displayed by Ramos in setting a deadline for the President's departure.

What is he keeping up his sleeve? A lifelong military man and so-called "psy-war" expert, Ramos is not the type to issue idle threats or to expose himself without a "Plan B" in place.

Seeking to reassure a public antsy about a possible military intervention, among other things, Ramos asks us to "just wait" for his next move, adding: "Don't be scared of me. Who the hell am I? Relax *lang kayo*. We're doing the work here in general for the welfare of the people and for our national security."

Well, I don't know how this may sound to you, but when a former general mentions "welfare of the people" and "national security" in the same sentence, it scares the bejeezus out of me.

I do believe it's time President GMA—along with her family, including the pony-loving granddaughter—packed up and left the Palace. As long as she persists in holding on to power, the political crisis can only escalate, along with other problems like economic uncertainty and loss of investor confidence, not to mention a general feeling of demoralization.

But do I believe she should depart at any price? No. Especially not if it would come as a result of the threats brandished by former military men impatient with the slow and intricate workings of democracy, and using their residual influence with the military to return to power.

* * *

RAMOS saved the day, if only temporarily, for Ms Arroyo when he offered the political establishment a short-term solution to the brewing crisis brought on by the "Garci" conversations.

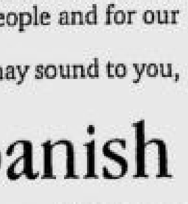
He proposed a truncated procedure of amending the Constitution, shifting the political system from presidential to parliamentary, and thereby necessitating that President Arroyo vacate her office to pave the way for elections for a prime minister. So in fairness to Ramos, he did offer GMA succor on pretty clear terms, and perhaps his latest deadline is born out of frustration at seeing his terms of engagement repudiated time and again.

In the end, it's really all up to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Only she can avert the brewing storm, since her voluntary resignation would be the quickest, most peaceful and most orderly means of political transition.

Guesting on a TV show aired soon after Christmas, I was asked what "gift" I would give to the President. I said I would like to give her a suitcase so she could begin packing up and preparing to leave the Palace. But it seems she has other plans. While she and Mike and the kids and grandkids "feel at home," though, we can only wonder when the final notice of eviction will be nailed at their door.

Figures from the Spanish civil war

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

EVEN IF MY COLUMN ON THE CHANGING OF street names was published way back in March of last year, I continue to receive e-mails that call for the temporary suspension or, at least, the regulation in the changing of street names and the names of public schools.

The same can be said about the regulation of billboards sprouting all over the country like warts, causing what the octogenarian heritage defender Consuelo D. Sison calls the "uglification" of the city. Sison simply defines "uglification" as the opposite of "beautification."

Some e-mails are so illuminating they must be shared in this space. Jose R. Perdigon made me realize the significance of Yague and Mascardo Streets, deep in the navel of Makati where the INQUIRER building is located. I presumed Mascardo was the revolutionary general who made a sneering reference to Antonio Luna's balls that almost led to a duel and a battle between their men. According to Perdigon, Mascardo Street is misspelled and should be Moscardo in honor of "the defender of the Alcazar in Toledo." Yague I presumed to be some obscure tree or plant, but it is also a surname. The same is true about Mola, which has nothing to do with a horse's anatomy.

Perdigon explained the thematic naming of the streets between Pablo Ocampo Sr. and Pasong Tamo (now Chino Roces), which the Ayalas, as Makati developers, named after people associated with the late Generalissimo Franco of Spain. Perdigon counted and identified at least 13 streets in the area as follows:

"Streets with Generals/Colonels on Franco's side: Beron, a misspelling of Barrón; Solchuaga, a misspelling of Solchaga; Aranda, the rebel commander of Oviedo, my hometown; Ponte; Yague, in Spanish spelled as Yagüe to pronounce the 'u'; Mascardo, a misspelling of Moscardó, the defender of the Alcazar in Toledo; Dávila, succeeded Mola in the campaigns in the North after the latter was killed in an air crash; Mola, commander of the armies in the North, one of the four plotters of the rebellion and senior to Franco. In the strategy to take Madrid, Mola amassed four divisions just north of Madrid. A journalist asked him which division would spearhead the push towards and enter Madrid first and he answered confidently, 'I already have a fifth division in Madrid,' referring to the sympathizers that the rebellion had inside the city, giving rise to the colloquial 'fifth column' and 'fifth columnist'; Godet, misspelling of Goded, rebel commander of Barcelona where the rebellion failed; Cabanelas, a misspelling of Cabanellas, the most senior commander among the rebels but not thoroughly trusted.

"Then there is Cervera Street. The Almirante Cervera was one of the heavy cruisers in Franco's navy bearing the name of the admiral who defended and lost Havana in the war with the US after the 'Maine incident.' And streets with the names of two political leaders related to the time and events around the Spanish civil war: Primo de Rivera, Jose Antonio, founder of Falange political party that opposed shot by shot the Popular Front during the last years of the Republic and was tried and executed in Alicante at the beginning of the Civil War. One of the judges in the tribunal, Rafael Anton, exiled himself in the Philippines and married one of the Legarda girls during World War II. Calvo Sotelo, leader of the coalition of parties of the right whose assassination by the security forces of the state (arrested at night, shot in the back of the head and dumped in the morgue of a cemetery) after being threatened in Congress by Dolores Ibarruri (La Pasionaria), precipitated the military rebellion and subsequent civil war.

"On other matters, I have a question on the choice of the names for the streets. The masterminds of the rebellion were Sanjurjo, Mola, Franco and Queipo de Llano, in that order of seniority. I find odd that of the four, only Mola is among the street names. It makes me think that maybe there were more whose names were substituted by others in the street roster by the city fathers.

"And finally a very minor thing to update your database, Dos Castillas [in Sampaloc, Manila] refers to the two administrative region divisions Castilla la Nueva y Castilla la Vieja, not to what we call today Castilla-Leon. This administrative arrangement (the two Castillas) existed at the time Sampaloc was developed and lasted until the enactment of the autonomic system under the new constitution in the late Seventies. Today, the autonomous region of Castilla-Leon is composed of six of the eight provinces formerly in Castilla la Vieja (Burgos, Soria, Segovia, Avila, Valladolid, and Palencia) plus the three provinces of former León (León, Zamora and Salamanca). The other two former provinces in Castilla la Vieja, Santander and Logroño, are today respectively the autonomous regions of Cantabria and Rioja. And the autonomous region of Castilla-La Mancha is made of four of the five provinces formerly in Castilla la Nueva: Toledo, Cuenca, Ciudad Real and Guadalajara. Madrid, the fifth, is now the autonomous region of Madrid. Confusing? Well it is enough to think that the street name Dos Castillas refers to the two former administrative regions of Castilla la Vieja and Castilla la Nueva.."

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

'Magaling'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

THE LATIN WORD "VIRTUS" GAVE ENGLISH TWO SETS OF words, one clustering around "virtue" or being good in a moral sense, and the other around "virtuosity," also being good but in the sense of skills and artistry.

I thought about those words at a concert last week that featured the Loboc Children's Choir and the Pundaquit Virtuosi, both musical groups of young Filipinos whose, well, virtuosity should give us more hope about the country's future.

Whoa, whoa, some of you may be thinking now, what do musical groups have to do with a nation's future? What our people need are the basics: food, shelter, jobs.

And more, I would argue.

Mozart in Zambales?

I'm moving way ahead though. Let me explain what the Loboc and Pundaquit groups are.

Teachers at the Loboc Central Elementary School in Bohol organized the children's choir some 25 years ago so they could join the National Music Competition for Young Artists (NAMCYA). Being a children's choir, the group's composition has changed over the years but they've been able to keep the bar high for chorale groups, winning several times in the NAMCYA and moving on as well to perform overseas in the United States, Europe and China.

The Pundaquit Virtuosi, on the other hand, grew out of Casa Miguel in San Rafael, Zambales, a center put up by the Bolipata family to encourage young people to appreciate the arts. Here, children from the community, including those of farmers and fisherfolk, are exposed to the visual arts, music and the theater.

Starting with 12 children in 1996, Casa San Miguel's program now has over a hundred students. As in the case of the Loboc choir, NAMCYA was a catalyst: Casa Miguel chose their best child musicians to compete and the Pundaquit Virtuosi was born.

You're probably picking up now on the drift of today's column as you can imagine some of the changes going on. I've always enjoyed walking through UP's College of Music hearing students going through their lessons and rehearsals, musical instruments and human voices ringing through the halls. I can imagine something similar in Loboc and San Rafael, two rural towns that have become living music conservatories.

Let your imagination run free and imagine, as did the INQUIRER's own Lala Rimando in an article some time back, how some parent in rural Zambales "might now be humming Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major."

Versatile virtuosi

Why not indeed? And it doesn't have to be Mozart or Bach. It could be other pieces in the varied repertoire of the two children's groups.

At last week's concerts, each of the groups did their own pieces but the last part was the most stunning, when they joined forces to render pieces that reflected both virtuosity as well as versatility. The pieces they did together included Lucio San Pedro's "Sa Ugoy ng Duyan," a medley from "Sound of Music," another medley of popular Filipino songs ("Habang May Buhay", "Batang Bata" and "Ikaw"), the Alleluia chorus from Handel's "Messiah" and, finally, the religious song "Light a Million Mornings", with Cris Villonco.

It's seeing or hearing excellence that alerts you to mediocrity. At the concert, I thought, admittedly with some despair, of how we're assaulted constantly, from Batanes to Tawi-tawi, by noise masquerading as music. Thanks to karaoke, it's hollering that gets you points, a musical style that's spilled over into performing singers who know the path to stardom has almost nothing to do with artistry and everything with aggressive marketing and dirty dancing.

We're still able to produce acceptable musicians, some even exported overseas, mainly as band players. By and large though, I'm seeing deteriorating quality, even for rock and pop musicians. The situation's even worse when it comes to finer music, such as classical and religious music, both Western and our own. Many are the times I've wanted to walk out of a church because the choir sounded like cats in heat.

No wonder we've lost out to many of our neighboring countries which now produce world-class concert performers. No wonder, too, Filipino music hasn't made waves yet in the world music circuit. Unless we appreciate our own, we can't ask the world to do so.

Better than good

We hear too little about alternative groups, and I'm referring as well to independent artists and producers like Bayang Barrios and Noel Cabangon who are developing Filipino music. With a bit more media coverage, all these groups can go a longer way toward raising the bar for music in the Philippines.

The UP Singing Ambassadors and the Loboc choir have compact disc recordings. I'm hoping we'll see the Pundaquit Virtuosi producing one as well. Loboc's choir even has a DVD that plugs Bohol's natural wonders as well. I don't see this as commercialization; in fact, I think all these groups need a bit more help to break through into the mainstream.

We've seen how competitions like NAMCYA encourage initiatives toward excellence. Going a step further, groups like the Metrobank Foundation might want to consider extending their awards for teaching excellence to include mentors who devote their lives nurturing tomorrow's fine performing artists, including the elementary school teachers in Loboc, Coke Bolipata in Zambales, the UP Singing Ambassadors' founder Ed Manguiat and many others who are silently working against the tsunami of mediocrity that threatens to inundate us. I think of the Iloilo-based violin maestro Gilopez Kabayao and how he, together with his family, goes around performing in schools, convinced the exposure can make a difference for young Filipinos.

It takes so little to encourage an appreciation of the other arts as well. Some time back I brought some urban poor kids to watch a play at Peta (Philippine Educational Theater Association) and for days on end, they were describing the performance to their friends with superlative praise, not just *galing* but *galing-galing*.

Galing was on my mind, too, at that concert, which incidentally, was for the benefit of Don Bosco's Tuloy Foundation, which helps street children. Some of the foundation's beneficiaries were drafted to perform as well. I can imagine how some of the children will remember as "*galing*" the rehearsals and the performance itself, an experience that will become as much a part of their memories as the food, shelter and vocational training they got from the foundation.

Maybe with time, they'll forget that brief encounter with virtuosity but, who knows, maybe someday they'll walk around with digital music players loaded with the kind of music they learned to love from doing that concert. It'll be music that's fine, music that's *galing*. Much like the Latin *virtus*, *galing* tells us there's goodness too in being not just good, not just better, but being the best.

It's time to free Jose Rizal

SOMETIME AGO, I WENT TO THE Luneta to proudly show off the Rizal monument to an American friend who was on his first visit to the Philippines. I was aghast when I found that the monument was fenced with stout ropes, thus preventing the public from reading the Jose Rizal's internationally famous poem "My Last Farewell."

I asked the security detail at the Luneta why Rizal's beautiful and imposing monument had been roped off. I was told this was to prevent people from harassing the ceremonial guards posted at the monument. The rope fence was installed reportedly after the son of an army colonel harassed the statue's honor guards. Since its erection, the Rizal monument has always been accessible to all kinds of people, including foreigners who left it impressed with his passionate nationalist poem.

The Rizal shrine at Fort Santiago has also been less accessible to people because it is closed to the public at 5 p.m. In the past, Fort Santiago was open to the public until well into the evening. Moreover, visitors to the fort are now being charged hefty fees, thus preventing poor people, including students, from probing and learning about this historic spot.

On the other hand, facets of Rizal's life and works have been commercialized, like the rendering of his execution into a daily light-and-shadow show for tourists at the Luneta. Even the otherwise admirable movie, "Rizal," was bastardized when he was shown going to his execution holding a rosary, a fact that no eyewitness of the well-attended event had ever recounted. This scene was invented to appease the clerical authorities.

This neglectful and even disdainful attitude of our leaders—in government as well as in society—toward Rizal and other nationalist heroes is reflected in their policies that promote admiration of everything Western, especially American; their total dependence on foreign capital, management and ownership to develop our country; their persistent efforts to erase the nationalist and protectionist provisions of our present Constitution as in the current proposed charter amendments; their policy to export Filipinos for overseas employment, while selling our land, sea and air to foreigners.

Our school curriculum has been reformed to downgrade the teaching of history by subsuming it in social subjects. The law requiring the teaching of Rizal's life and unexpurgated writings is widely ignored by both public and private educational institutions. The assault against Rizal and his ideas, mounted by the Spanish friars and colonial authorities to justify his execution, has resurged and has been gaining ground. The purpose is to destroy the independent spirit of the Filipinos, their self-confidence and their self-respect, so that they will continue to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for foreigners both at home and abroad.

It is time we free Rizal.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

We must not wait for history to judge the CA members

THIS IS IN RESPONSE to the letter of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace titled, "CA members await history's judgment." (PDI 12/29/05)

The letter criticizes the confirmation of Gen. Jovito Palparan's promotion to the rank of major general by the Commission on Appointments. I couldn't agree more with the letter, except for the last part, which left it to history to make a judgment on those who had a hand in Palparan's promotion.

Must we really leave it to history to judge them? As Christians, are we not duty-bound to cry out to the heavens and condemn this shameless act of the Commission on Appointments in the strongest possible terms?

I commend the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace for bringing out its criticism of the members of the Commission on Appointments in the open. I am just wondering why the commission's action escaped the attention of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (did it?) and why it failed again to exercise its prophetic mission in this case.

Palparan is perceived to be (even accused of being) a notorious criminal, a killer of innocent people and a reckless violator of human rights. In his own words, he would not rest until he has eliminated all the "communists" in his area of responsibility. Clearly, Palparan is the Filipino exponent of the US war on terror. That our President is a slavish hanger-on to this war on terror is a well-known fact.

The confirmation of Palparan therefore shows that our lawmakers, in particular the "honorable" members of the Commission on Appointments, officially adhere to that policy. This shameless act should be exposed and condemned now.

There is no justice in our present system of government, like there was no justice under martial law. The New People's Army provided justice where the regime did not. Are we back to those martial law days?

—ARNOLD VAN VUGT,
P.O. Box 237,
Cagayan de Oro City

Our leaders' delusions

IT'S A PITY THAT WE EXAMINE OURSELVES only on the last day of each year when obviously we should do this whenever necessary. But this we don't do simply because we dislike having to admit our own mistakes. We have a strong tendency to disguise our faults for fear of being rejected. This indicates we are being held hostage by our own egoistic habits.

The bad examples of past leaders were always there to remind our present leaders of the importance of preserving not only honesty in leadership but also the need to understand other people's situations and needs. (All elders are leaders in one way or the other because the need to show good examples is a moral responsibility that should not be taken lightly.) Still, the same mistakes are committed simply because leaders give much importance to maintaining the status quo, even though the status quo showed clear signs of being a mechanical thing that dehumanizes. In fact, it is not entirely true that material prosperity will make everything right in our lives. To be sure, material wealth is a good thing but only if our moral standards are preserved. Otherwise, wealth becomes a deadweight that will make us sink to the depths of depravity.

No doubt, society can survive only if it is able to distinguish right from wrong on the basis of truth rather than on the basis of cultural, traditional or personal preferences—truth being the only ground for good human conduct. In other words, the egoistic tendency to interpret things the way one wants them to be merely serves to magnify our differences and intensify our conflicts.

This should give us a clear idea of how peaceful co-existence—and love—can be achieved. Discarding the habits that deplete our inner strength is the first step in that direction. Indeed, unless our leaders learned to negate their own delusions, life cannot get better. If we still haven't noticed, promises of creating better opportunities for the people have not produced those opportunities. Neither will faith that things will get better produce miracles because, let's face it, improvements come only with good deeds, not with clever rhetoric occasioned by our illusions and myths.

—ERNESTO KELLY MAGTOTO,
ernestomagtoto@yahoo.com

No comfort in this NLEX restroom

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, MY WIFE AND I WENT home to Tarlac to celebrate the coming of the New Year. While cruising along the "new" North Luzon Expressway, my wife had to answer the call of nature.

Upon reaching the last toll gate going to the north, my wife went to the restroom. Much to her surprise, the restroom was communal. Men and women shared the same restroom. And to make matters worse, the odor was so unbearable that the ladies who were waiting in line didn't bother to use it anymore.

Considering the North Luzon Expressway's high toll fees, we expected a more decent, clean and separate—for men and for women—comfort rooms for the users of the expressway. I hope that this problem will be attended to immediately.

—RUBEN C. ROZAL,
49 K-9 St.,
West Kamias, Quezon City

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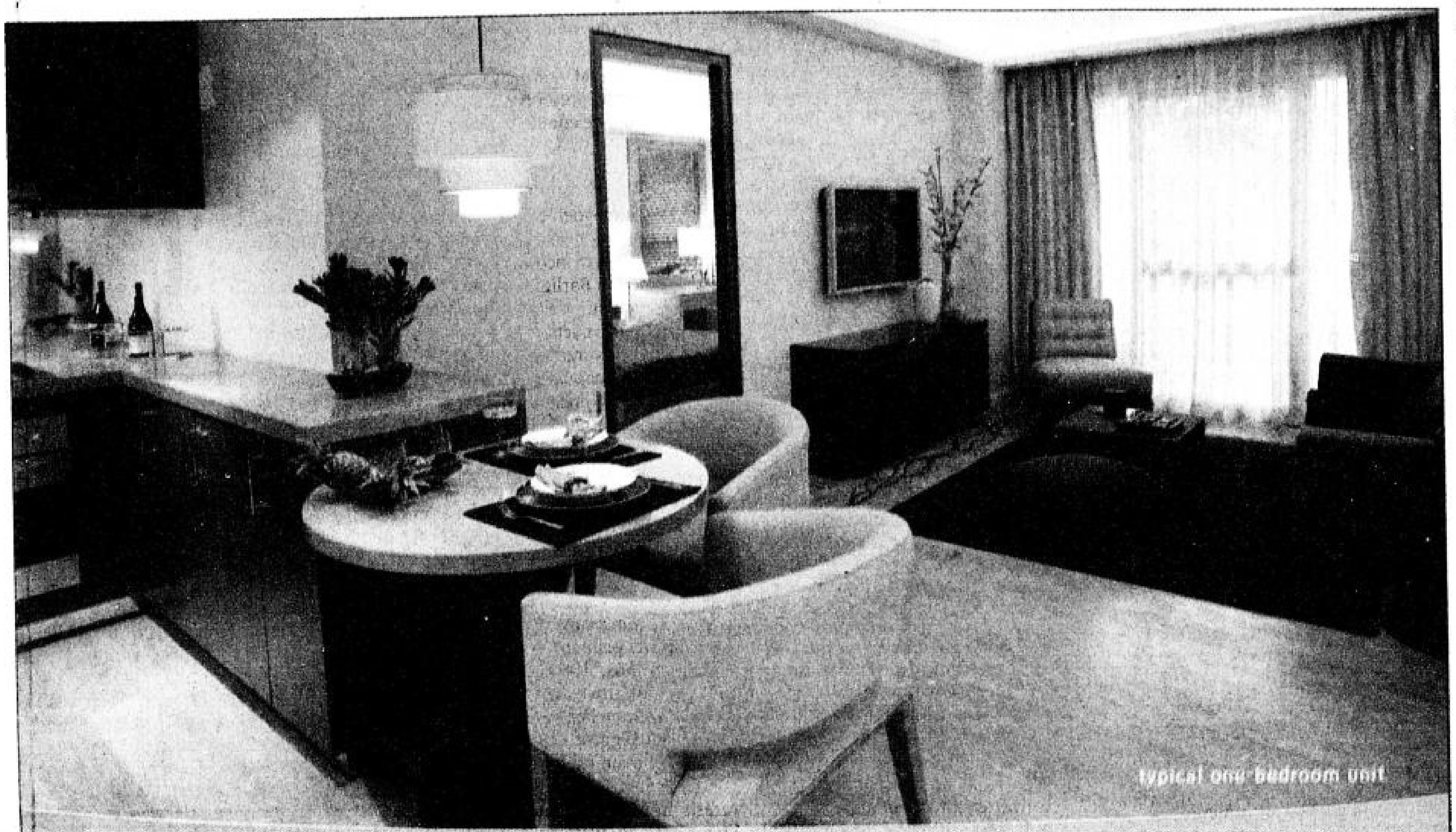

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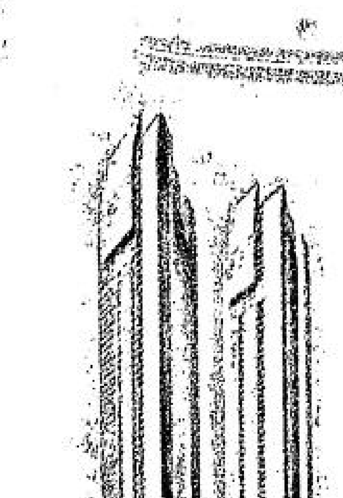

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
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Igorot elders to write own history

By Maurice Malanes
La Trinidad, Benguet

ELDER FLORENTINO MERINO of Kabayan, Benguet, shakes his head as he relates how at least three writers have made fantastic, if not blatantly erroneous, claims about how his ancestors mummified their dead.

Three written accounts Merino encountered claimed that to mummify a dead corpse in Kabayan, a person was made to drink salt solution while he or she was still alive.

"This is totally not correct," said the former mayor of the Ibaloi upland town famed for its century-old mummies.

To mummify their dead, Kabayan folk of yore used salt solution apart from some herbs, all right, but "not when a person was still alive," Merino said.

"Relatives would not allow this. The salt solution technique was applied when a person had just died," he added.

Such errors committed by scholars and writers prompted Merino to help found the Cordillera Historical Society (CHS), of which he was elected vice president.

According to its constitution and bylaws, the CHS, composed of Igorot professionals and students, seeks "to update, correct local history, misconceptions, errors, controversies in accordance with scholarly standards," among other things.

Its formation had "long been overdue," said Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan, who inducted the officers on Dec. 19 last year. "There are many uncorrected errors in our history that need to be checked; otherwise, we will be misinforming and miseducating our children."

A "MAMBUNONG" (tribal priest) presides over rituals performed during the return of stolen ancient mummies to Kabayan, Benguet. The rituals were meant to appease the mummies' spirits and to ask them to protect the community. EV ESPIRITU

Domogan recalled how some foreign authors had pictured Igorots as "lazy, thieves, polygamous, headhunters and uncivilized."

As a result, "we were ashamed to identify ourselves as Igorots," he said.

Cultural pride

The good news, Domogan noted, was that Igorots were now slowly regaining their cultural pride. He said the organization of the CHS would help enable the Igorot to fully regain pride in their cultural heritage and history.

Since its launching in November last year, the CHS has become a venue for local historians to present papers about vignettes of Cordillera history and culture.

Prof. Morr Pungayan, an Ibaloi, presented a paper about the "Battle of Tonglo" where Ibaloi warriors defended their land from the encroachment of gold-seeking Spaniards.

Merino also presented a paper explaining the background and context of the Bendian dance.

The dance is an epic in itself, depicting both the spiritual outlook and history of the Ibaloi who first settled in the valleys along the Agno River, the elder said.

During the CHS general assembly last month, two more historians presented papers, which, officers said, would be edited, compiled and published later.

'Bodong'

Lawyer Dominador Sumayden talked about the history of the "*bodong*" or peace pacts in his hometown of Barlig in Mt. Province.

Peace has long reigned in Barlig through 13 peace pacts that it forged with various tribes of Kalinga and two more peace pacts with Ifugao, said Sumayden, who also works with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

Inspired by the lawyer's presentation, the CHS president, Dr. Rogelio Colting of Benguet State University, said the group could help establish "peace academies" to help study various ways of settling conflicts and promoting peace.

For his part, retired educator Biano Baucas, also of Kabayan, talked about traditional beliefs, rituals and customs related to preventing and curing diseases in Benguet.

Another yet unexplored aspect of history writing is the role of the Chinese not only in the Cordillera's but also in the country's history.

Long before Ferdinand Magellan set foot in the archipelago in 1521, the Chinese had already been trading with the Igorot, who bartered gold for Chinese porcelain jars and other chinaware.

WILSON
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Fisherfolk replant decimated mangrove forests

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Bolinao, Pangasinan

A COMMON PROBLEM AND A COMMON solution bind fishermen of Anda, Bolinao, Bani and Alaminos City (Abba) in western Pangasinan. The problem: Decimated mangrove forests. The solution: Reforestation.

The fisherfolk in these coastal areas replanted mangroves even long before a tsunami hit Asian countries in 2004, a tragedy from which many people learned about the importance of mangrove forests.

Together, the fishermen have replanted almost 200 hectares with mangrove trees.

A group from Bolinao is leading the campaign. So far, 74.11 ha of mangrove areas in seven villages have been reforested.

The "seeds" of the project were sowed in 1995, said fisherman Jesem Gabatin. That year, the fisherfolk were organized with assistance from the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute, Haribon Foundation, UP College of Social Work and Community Development, and the local government.

Four groups were formed then from the villages of Binabalian, Balingasay, Arnedo and Pilar. They were federated in 1997 under the Kaisahan ng mga Samahan Alay sa Kalikasan Inc. (Kaisaka).

The Kaisaka, which now has 13 groups under its wings, asks for assistance from the government and other nongovernment organizations in its desire to replant mangroves.

Last year, Gov. Victor Agbayani gave 5,000 propagules (mangrove seedlings) each to three people's organizations (POs) in Bolinao and two groups in Anda. The provincial government maintains mangrove nurseries in Bolinao, Anda and Alaminos.

In Bolinao, the mangrove reforestation went to high gear in 2004 when the United Nations Development Program released a P2.4-million grant to Kaisaka.

The federation, headed by Gabatin, trains fisherfolk on how to collect, plant and take care of propagules.

"For each propagule planted, we pay fishermen 75 centavos," Annabelle Echavez, Kaisaka vice president, said.

The women take care of the mangroves while the men are out in the sea fishing, said Myrna Embilo, also Kaisaka vice president.

Bolinao once had thick mangrove forests but these were destroyed to make way for fishponds. Records from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources showed that 195.6 ha, mostly mangrove forests, in the town are covered by fishpond lease agreements (FLAs).

Virgin mangrove forests still exist, said environmental activist Margaret Celeste. Surrounding the Balingasay River, a recipient of the Philippine Wetlands Conservation Award in 2004, are hectares of century-old mangroves.

Anda, Alaminos

Residents in the island-town of Anda have shown the same zeal in rehabilitating mangrove forests in the town.

Board Member Alice Pulido started the program in 1998 during her term as mayor. Her husband Nestor, now the town mayor, continues the projects.

Municipal agriculturist Beth Tomas said 56.7 ha in 10 villages have been replanted with mangrove trees. The town still has natural-growth mangrove forests.

Like in Bolinao, Anda's mangrove forests were converted into fishponds. BFAR records showed that 209.11 ha are in the hands of fishpond owners bearing FLAs.

Board Member Pulido said residents who used to enjoy bountiful harvests from the communal fishing grounds were displaced when the FLAs were granted and ended up working for the fishpond owners.

The earliest mangrove reforestation project in Pangasinan is found in San Miguel village in Bani. The 42-ha project was established in 1990 by the late Mayor Marcelo Navarro with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In 1995 and 1996, the town won the Likas Yaman Award as the country's best community-based upland development project.

Mayor Gabriel Navarro, son of the late mayor, built a walkway from the mainland to the project site where different species of birds swarm. Crustaceans and different fish species have also found refuge there.

Bani has the biggest area of coastal and mangrove forests that had been cleared to make way for fishponds. A total of 290.9 ha are covered by FLAs granted by the BFAR.

In Alaminos, 13 ha in 10 villages have been replanted with mangroves, said Milberth Ferrer, city aquaculturist.

Planting activities initially started in 1997, involving US Peace Corps volunteers, in Telbang village, but the massive work took place in 1999.

"We have shifted to planting multispecies of mangroves so that there will be biodiversity and protection against infestation," Ferrer said.

The city government provides planting materials and technical assistance to the 10 POs involved in the project. The POs manage the reforestation areas, with assistance from caretakers assigned by the city government.

Fisherfolk in coastal villages replanted mangroves long before a tsunami hit Asia in 2004

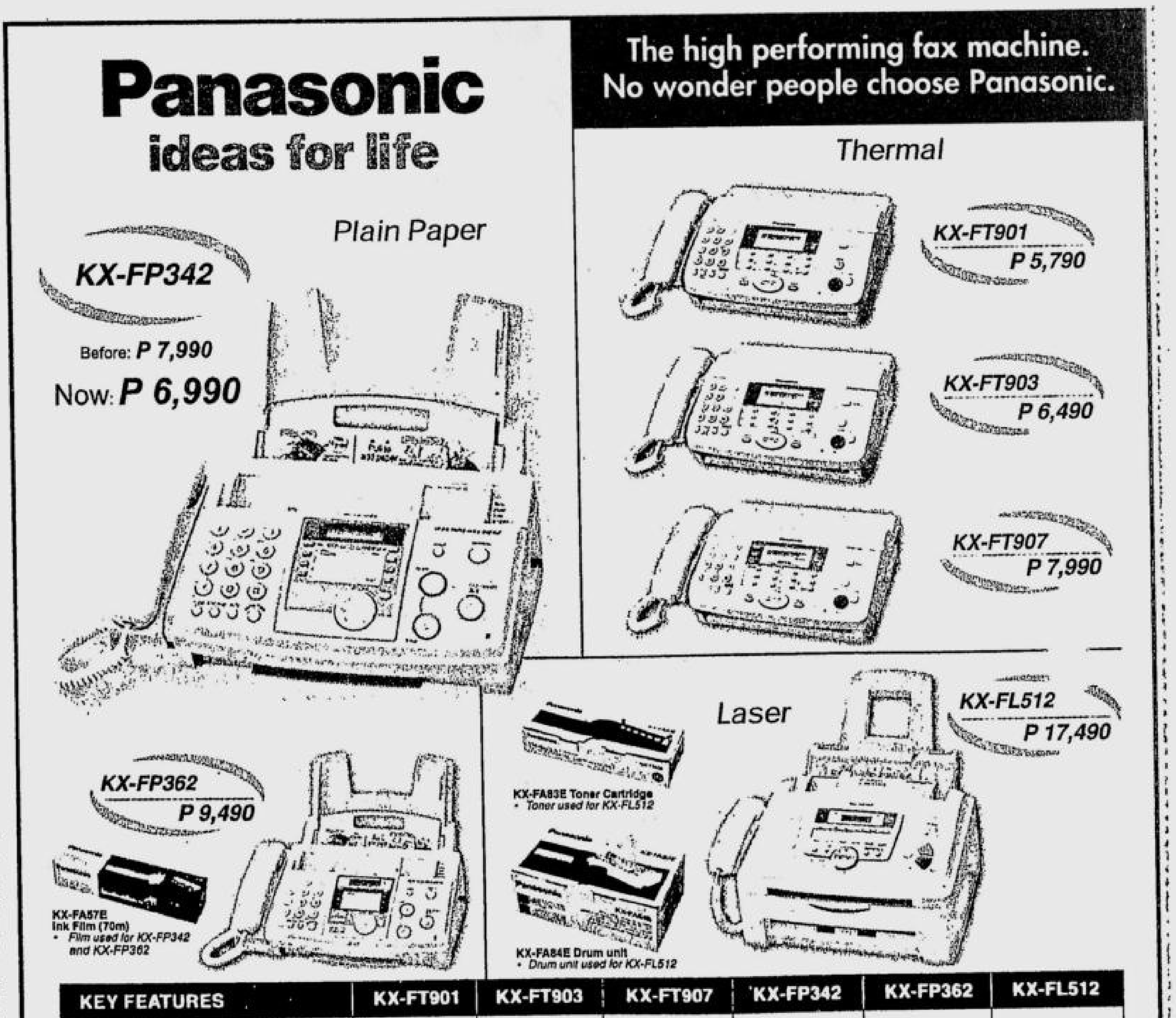
The city's Hundred Islands National Park also used to be covered with thick mangrove forests, but 261 ha of its territory had been converted into fishponds.

In 2000, 12 ha of three-year-old mangroves in Barangay Victory in Bolinao were destroyed because of an oil spill from a cargo ship headed for the power plant in Sual town.

In Alaminos, 1.4 ha of newly planted mangroves were uprooted by a typhoon last year.

But the biggest threat comes from people themselves.

Early last year, mangrove forests in Mal-ong, Anda and in Luna, Bolinao, were cut down by people who wanted to convert the areas into fishponds.



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Lafayette fine not enough, say execs

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE MULTIMILLION-PESO FINE SLAPPED against an Australian mining firm apparently was not enough to appease the fishing communities surrounding the Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project site in Albay and officials of Sorsogon, including the House minority floor leader.

Local officials, fishermen's group and House Minority Leader Chiz Escudero yesterday reiterated a call for Lafayette Mining Inc., operator of the P10.4-billion mining project in Rapu-Rapu, Albay to pull out of the island so fishermen can recover their livelihood.

Prieto-Diaz Mayor Benito Doma said the P10.7 million fine on Lafayette's subsidiary, Rapu-Rapu Processing Inc., was not enough to ensure that the mining company would install safeguards to prevent another mine spill that caused fish kills on the island.

"The economic loss of fishers is bigger than the fine because it could last even after Lafayette's project ends in seven years. Until now, the people in other cities are not buying fish from Rapu-Rapu, our area and other towns in Sorsogon facing the Pacific coast," Doma said in a phone interview yesterday.

In an e-mailed statement, Escudero said the fine was too small and not commensurate to the damage that Lafayette has done.

He also said the fine should translate into livelihood and economic opportunities for fishermen who suffered from the effects of the mine spill.

In an interview, Rod Watt, Lafayette country manager, said the firm would comply with the conditions set by the DENR along with the P10.7 million fine.

"We would not want an untoward incident to happen again," he said. "We would avail of the approval of the government ... before we proceed with our mining activities."

Roderick Salazar, lawyer and head of the Lafayette subsidiary Rapu-Rapu Minerals Inc., said his firm remained optimistic that "by correcting the issues and resuming operations ... we can deliver the type of production that will sustain profitability and local employment."

But Escudero, in his statement, said the environment should take precedence over whatever economic gains could be had from the Lafayette operations.

Prieto-Diaz, an island municipality across Rapu-Rapu, has reported big losses in its fisheries trade. People refused to buy fish from areas near the mine site even if these were sold cheap.

"Until now, the fish scare is there," Doma said.

He said international and local nongovernment organizations are helping small municipalities collate data to document the adverse impact of Lafayette's mining project on fishing communities, mangroves and whale sharks.

"The fight will continue. We still want Lafayette out of here," Doma said, disclosing plans to file a civil suit against Lafayette.

Pamalakaya, a militant fishermen's group, said the problem would not end unless Lafayette is forced out of the 5,000-hectare island with a rich marine ecosystem. *With a report from Cristine Gaylican*

Mining operations set back, says DENR

LEGAZPI CITY—THE P10.7 MILlion fine, among other fines, and the strict conditions imposed on Lafayette Philippines Inc. by the Pollution and Adjudication Board (PAB) will adversely affect the company's operations in Rapu-Rapu, Albay, according to Rey Juan, Mines and Geosciences Bureau regional director.

With Lafayette's operations already suspended after the mining spills late last year, Juan stressed that the ruling would further set back the company's timetable.

"Well, there's no one to blame here except Lafayette, which had admittedly overlooked putting up the necessary technologies needed in the continuous gold milling operations," he said.

Tough decision

Rod Watt, Lafayettte country manager, said in a phone interview that the firm would study the penalties and fines imposed on it as well as all other conditions and requirements that his company was asked to comply with.

"It's kind of hard for us but we humbly submit to the dictates of Philippine laws. That's what the law says and we are going to abide by it," he said.

Watt added that he could not further comment on the fines imposed on Lafayette since the company has yet to receive the copies of the PAB ruling.

"The thing is, we are always cooperative with the Philippine government. Right now, our initial plan is to schedule a dialogue with the PAB to discuss all the mentioned conditions. Other than that I cannot make any statement," Watt said.

The P10.7 million total amount of fines and other penalties that have yet to be paid in connection with the Oct 11 and Oct. 31 mine spills in the island-municipality of Rapu-Rapu in Albay are considered to be the biggest amount of fines imposed by the government so far on a company in violation of the Clean Water Act.

Juan said Lafayette is still determined to continue its operations despite the ruling, but it will take some time before the company could gain its momentum as it would consider all the new strict conditions and requirements for study.

Resources

"Just imagine that amount of money, the pressure to comply with all the conditions in the soonest possible time, and the clamor of the local folk. This is indeed a make or break case. It only shows that our government means business here, especially with regard to the Mining Act of 1995," Juan said.

Lafayette is strictly required to rehabilitate its settling, polishing and event ponds to ensure that these can hold mine wastes and effluents from the project before it could resume operations.

The rest will depend on how Lafayette will comply with the conditions and how determined the Philippine government will be in its continuous strict monitoring of mining in accordance with the Mining Act of 1995, Juan said. *Gil Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

STAR A giant sea turtle draws the attention of environment officials, children and villagers in a coastal town in Poro Point, La Union as it gets ready to return to its home in the sea. The turtle, measuring about 3 feet long, was tagged for monitoring before it was released back to the waters. It strayed to shore and was found by fishermen who alerted authorities. AP

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More cops deployed to secure Ati-Atihan

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—MORE policemen would be sent to Kalibo, Aklan in preparation for this year's Ati-Atihan Festival on Jan. 15.

Supt. Cipriano Querol, Capiz police director, said the augmentation force would be led by Insp. Leo Batiles, chief of the 1st Capiz Police Mobile Group.

Querol said the presence of an augmentation force would ensure that there would not be a repeat of last year's tragedy that left nine people, including the policeman who went on a shooting rampage, dead.

In last year's Ati-Atihan Festival, PO1 Jonathan Moreno went on a shooting rampage and gunned down first his superiors—Supt. Odelardo Magayanes, the provincial police director, and Insp. Manuel Elijay, the Kalibo police chief—before killing four other policemen and a five-year-old girl.

A doctor, one of the 30 other civilians wounded in the rampage, died a few days later. Moreno was killed by policemen.

The celebration of the Ati-Atihan Festival would proceed despite last year's tragedy, that police described as an isolated case.

ROUNDUP

5 dead in road accident

MIDSAYAP, North Cotabato—At least five persons were killed in a road accident in Libungan, North Cotabato Tuesday, survivors said. The vehicle, locally known as a double tire passenger truck, was loaded with corn and was carrying nearly 30 passengers heading for Midsayap from Alamada, Cotabato when the accident happened at about 11 am. Its brakes failed as it went down a road in Barangay Montay, Libungan and turned turtle at least four times, according to survivor Simon Querido. Querido and more than a dozen others were wounded. Three of the casualties were identified as Dorotea Sato, 79, her son Constancio, 49 and Marjolina Querido, a teacher. The two others were unidentified.

Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Telecom compound bombed

PANDI, Bulacan—At least 10 armed men bombed the facilities of a telecommunications firm in Barangay Poblacion here on Monday. Bulacan police director Senior Supt. Benedict Michael Fokno said the men arrived at the Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. (Digitel) compound at 11:20 p.m. Monday and started firing their M-16 and M-14 rifles. Fokno said the men threw a Molotov cocktail at the facility built in the middle of a rice field. The explosion started a fire that burned the facility's cables. The Digitel compound houses the cell site for the company's Sun cellular mobile phone service. No one was reported hurt in the attack.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Engineer slain

COTABATO CITY—An engineer, embroiled in an ownership dispute over a piece of property, was shot dead in Makilala town, North Cotabato on Friday. Col. Ruperto Pabustan, head of the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade, said two unidentified men gunned down Oscar Villarosa in Barangay Kisante. He was then with his wife, Vilma. Kisante village chief Lotero Panpanga said the couple had just attended a hearing involving the sale of rubber trees in Kisante.

Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Bird flu info drive

DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial government will start a massive information drive on avian flu starting this month. Provincial veterinarian Antonio Mutia, action officer of the Provincial Task Force Avian (Bird) Flu, said the task force is taking seriously the threat of avian flu, following reports that it has already killed 76 people worldwide. Mutia said while the Philippines remains bird flu free, it was necessary to give the correct information and educate the people on what to do if the dreaded virus found its way in the province.

Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau

Sandbagging students

CITY OF CALAPAN—Students were being tapped to put sand in sacks that will be used to prevent flooding here. The sandbaggging, which started in late December, was expected to be completed in a month. More volunteers were needed for the temporary flood control measure undertaken in Barangay Bucayao, site of the dike, which collapsed due to the floods that hit Mindoro last month.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Local gov't agencies go upland

LIGAO CITY—Some government agencies here have been visiting upland barangays for the past four months to facilitate the villagers' transactions with the city government. Mayor Linda Gonzalez said the extension service will save upland villagers money, time and effort. Among the agencies who regularly come to visit are the civil registrar, the treasurer's office, the city health and social welfare and development offices.

Michael B. Jauclan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Flyover off limits for 7 hours daily

By Tarra V. Quismundo

TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF MOTORISTS, the C-5 Katipunan flyover in Quezon City would be closed to all types of vehicles from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily, beginning this week.

Angelito Vergel de Dios, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Traffic Operations Center (MMDA-TOC) executive director, said yesterday the seven-hour ban would be enforced for 30 days to give the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) time to study how the structure could best be repaired.

The MMDA had imposed a round-the-clock ban on trucks on the flyover, which was weakened by a fire that razed shanties underneath the structure last month. Only trucks and vehicles that weigh five tons or less can use the flyover.

"The structure became brittle after the fire. This is to mitigate the effect of the load on the structure and to prevent any accidents," De Dios said.

The MMDA, in coordination with the DPWH and Quezon City's public safety department, began enforcing the seven-hour ban on all types of vehicles last Monday.

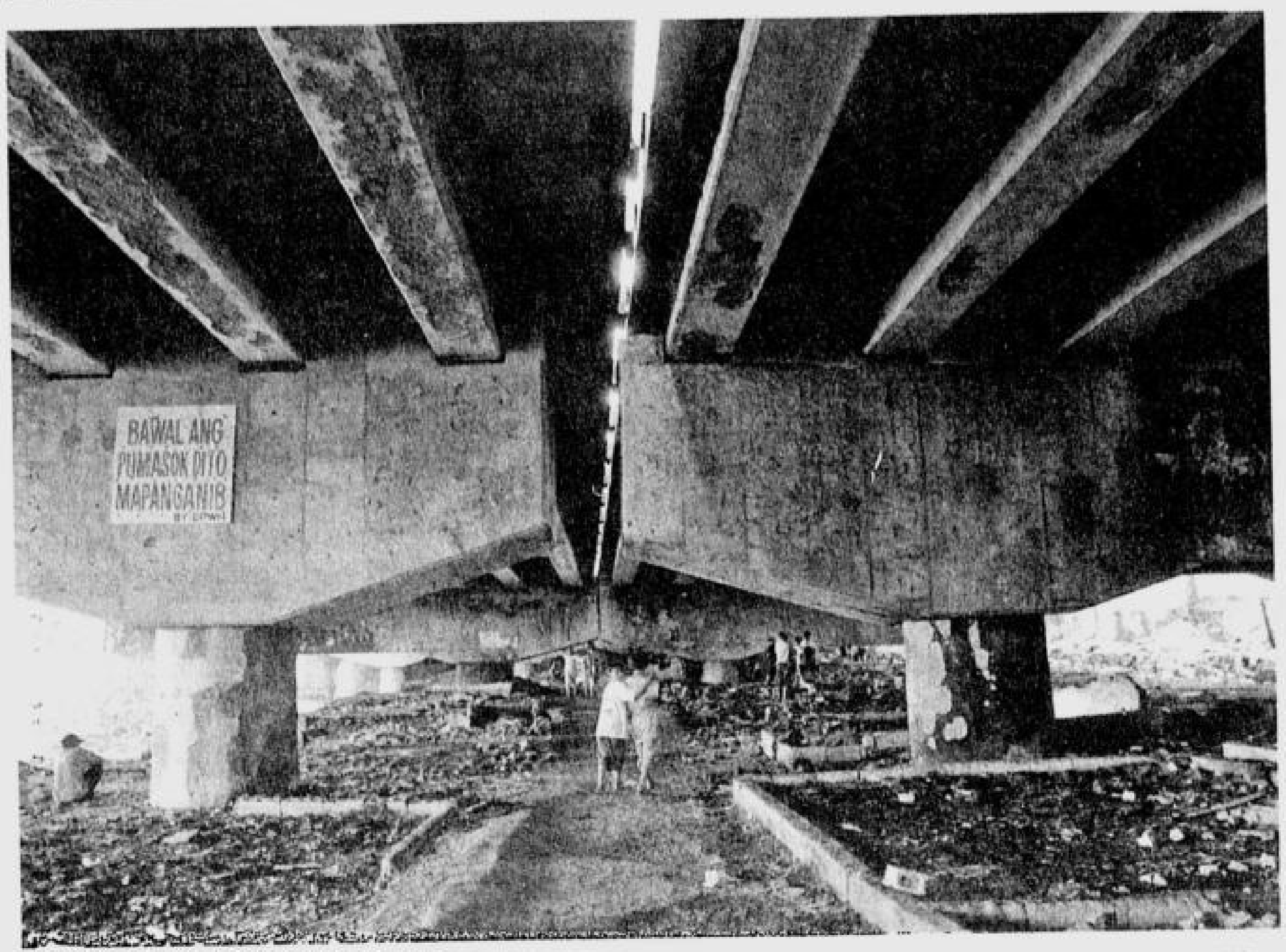
On Dec. 26, a fire razed some 300 houses beneath the flyover, leaving a woman and her child dead. The blaze raged for nearly four hours and exposed the structure's underbelly to extreme heat.

"It is natural that the physical property of materials making up the flyover would alter after long exposure to heat. In this case, fire affected the internal tendons and high tension wires serving as structural support for the [bypass]," said Ramon Ona, chief engineer of the MMDA-TOC's Traffic Engineering Center.

Ona drew up alternative routes for motorists who would be affected by the flyover's closure. Light vehicles going northbound from C-5 Road may turn right at FVR Road, then go straight through the service road of Riverbank Bridge to reach Marcos Highway. Another alternative is taking a right to Maj. Dizon from FVR Road, right to Marcos Highway and straight to the U-turn slot.

Those going southbound from Katipunan Avenue may take a right to Xavierville Avenue, left to Anonas, right to Aurora Boulevard and left at 20th Avenue. Northbound trucks from C-5 Road may take a right at Ortigas Avenue beneath the Ortigas-C-5 flyover, left to Amang Rodriguez Avenue, right at Marcos Highway and straight to the road's U-turn slot.

Heavy vehicles may also take Industria from C-5 Road bypassing Ortigas Avenue, turn left on Rodriguez Avenue, right toward Marcos Highway, then straight to the U-turn slot.



BEGINNING this week, the C-5 Katipunan flyover will be closed to traffic from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily. The ban will be enforced for 30 days to protect the flyover from further weakening following a fire last month which affected its structural support.

JOAN BONDOC

Another 'Nazareno' devotee dies

By Margaux C. Ortiz

ANOTHER BLACK NAzarene devotee died at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) yesterday morning, a day after a stampede during the annual Quiapo procession claimed the life of a 38-year-old man and injured 20 others.

Ricardo Escobido succumbed to hypoxic schemic encephalopathy, or lack of oxygen flow to the brain, at around 7 a.m., according to PGH spokesperson Dr. Michael Tee.

Tee said Escobido was brought to the hospital at 9 p.m. on Monday, where he was temporarily revived after registering a zero heart rate.

A few hours earlier, another devotee, Reynante Martinez, had suffered a heart attack and was declared dead on arrival at the PGH.

Police officials and paramedics said Martinez and four other devotees fell into a manhole with a defective cover and were stepped on during a stampede during the procession.

Tee said around 15 devotees were brought to the hospital on Monday. Four of them complained of high blood pressure and hypertension, while 11 were treated for physical injuries.

Manila Police District Supt. Romulo Sapitula had said that around 20 persons suffered from a variety of injuries during the procession.

"While there were only 16 people injured last year, this year's activity was more peaceful because organizers and devotees did not have a hard time taking out the statue from the church," Sapitula said in an earlier interview.

A man had also died of a heart attack two years ago on Palanca Street, Quiapo while walking alongside the 200-year-old statue of Christ bearing a cross.

Manila dorms face safety check

By Margaux C. Ortiz

WITH THE RECOVERY OF THE CHARRED bodies of a couple who were reported missing after a fire in Sampaloc, Manila, on Sunday, police said yesterday that two other persons have not yet been found in the aftermath of the blaze.

The fire claimed the lives of eight persons.

FO1 Guillermo Fermalino said they have not yet been able to account for Henry Lee and his wife who were among the occupants of a two-story apartment building on 833 P. Campa St. that burned down over the weekend.

"They could be the last two unidentified bodies which were brought to the Universal Funeral Service on Tayuman Street," Fermalino said in a phone interview. "We urge their relatives to go to the funeral parlor for identification purposes."

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday ordered the Bureau of Fire Protection to intensify the inspection of dormitories and boarding houses for possible violations of existing fire regulations and safety standards. The secretary called for stricter observation of fire standards such as those covering fire extinguishers and fire exits.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza also ordered City Administrator Dino Nable to form a composite team to inspect safety provisions in the city's boarding houses.

Reyes, on the other hand, said public safety calls for the strict implementation of fire safety measures stipulated under the building and fire code.

Fermalino said the relatives of Ricky and Cherry Ann Alag, who were reported missing earlier, claimed the couple's remains from the funeral home. "The relatives were asked to produce dental records to confirm the identities of the Alags," he added.

Fermalino said they would invite building owner Juan Manahan, who also owned three other adjacent boarding houses, to shed light on the management of the establishments. *With Norman Bordadora*

METROBRIEFS

Bike theft suspect arrested

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

ONE of the alleged leaders of a syndicate engaged in the theft of motorcycles and scooters in Metro Manila was arrested by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) last week. Suspect Roderick Daz, 35, of M.H. Del Pilar St., Ciudad Real, San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan, was presented during a news conference at the NBI headquarters yesterday. NBI National Capital Region chief Ruel Lasala said interested customers usually contacted the suspect to tell him what kind of motorcycles they wanted to buy. The suspect would then call up his men who would scour the metropolis for the motorcyles specified by the customers.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Security officer shot dead

A SECURITY officer of the Department of Public Safety and Traffic Management (DPSTM) in Caloocan City was killed by armed men Monday night. Police identified the victim as Rolando Chiapco, 36, of Everest St., Mountain Heights Subdivision, Caloocan City. A report filed by Chief Insp. Jose Valencia, chief of the city's investigation branch, said the victim was seated in front of his house when four armed men on board two motorcycles stopped and shot him. Chiapco was rushed to the hospital but was declared dead on arrival. "It could be work related because he was in charge of the security of all schools in the city," said Al Santamaria, DPSTM head. Santamaria himself survived an ambush attempt last year.

Nancy C. Carvajal

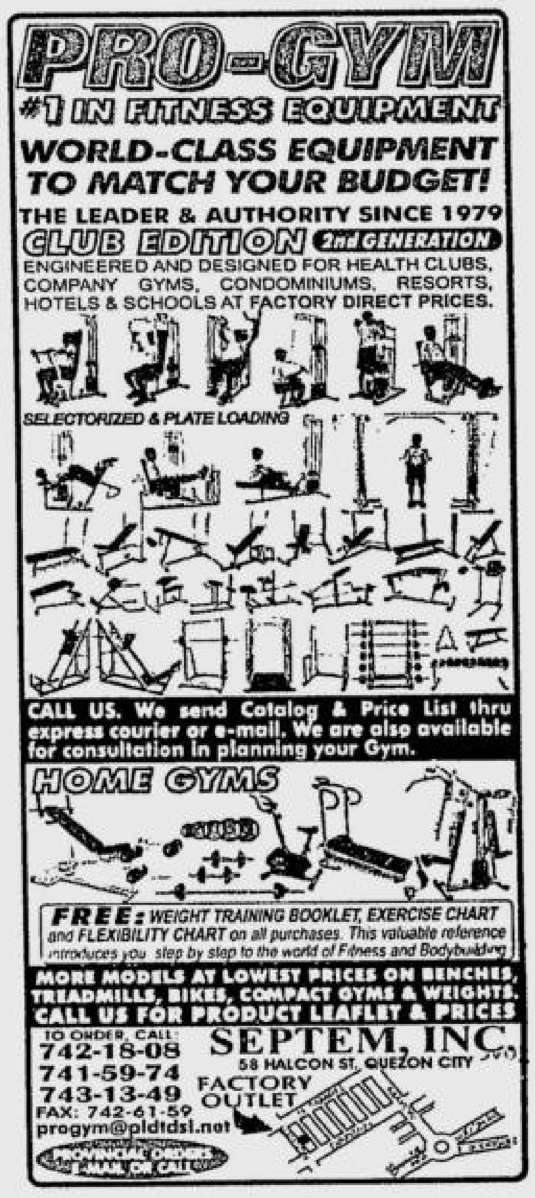
Nursing seminar

THE SAN Beda College Nursing Class of 2006 will hold a macro-seminar tomorrow with the theme "Boundless Practice: A Call for Human-oriented Quality Nurses." The free seminar will be held at the SBC conference hall in Mendiola, Manila from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through the efforts of Section 4BCN under Prof. Myrna Olaso, R.N., M.A. Ed. Distinguished panelists include Patricia Luna, assistant regional director of the Department of Social Welfare and Development-National Capital Region; Dr. Irene Baluyut, pediatrician and child protection specialist at the Philippine General Hospital; Henry Paul Santos, officer of the Philippine Nurses Association-Committee on Ethics; and Dr. Valentin Bernales, head of the National Bureau of Investigation—Medico-Legal Division.

Makati-MMDA turf war

A CONFRONTATION looms between the Makati City government and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) as the former announced yesterday that it would soon take over from the agency the management of traffic in the city's national roads. The Makati City Hall said the move "is consistent with provisions of the Local Government Code cited in a recent Supreme Court decision... which said that local governments have the sole authority over traffic management in their respective areas." But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the move would defeat "the spirit and intent" of having a metropolitan government such as the MMDA which, he said, was created to take care of the metropolis' problems on traffic, garbage and flooding.

Tarra V. Quismundo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BASKETBALL: NCAA – North Carolina vs Virginia Tech; 8:30 a.m.; ESPN – The defending champion Tar Heels tangle with the Hokies. Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Compiled by L. Mangulat

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Express, Aces go for jugular

Perasol fined for Game 1 outburst

AIR21 STANDS AT THE EDGE of a major breakthrough in its franchise history. It just has to find a way to finish off the most decorated team in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Seeking to advance to the quarterfinals for the first time since joining the league, the Express go for the clincher against the San Miguel Beermen in Game 2 of their best-of-three wild-card series today in the San Mig Coffee-Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Since the wild-card format was implemented in 2004, the Bert Lina-owned franchise has yet to hurdle that phase of the tournament. In contrast, the Beermen have made it past the elimination round 25 straight times since 1996, the longest streak among active teams.

"If we want to win the series, we have to close it on Wednesday (today)," said Air21 head coach Bo Perasol after the Express seized Game 1 of the series, 97-88. "A Game 3 will be very difficult for us."

But things are bound to be different this time. For one, this is not the same San Miguel team that squeezed three tough matches in the same number of days. The Beermen, the winningest team in the league with 17 titles, are coming off a three-day rest.

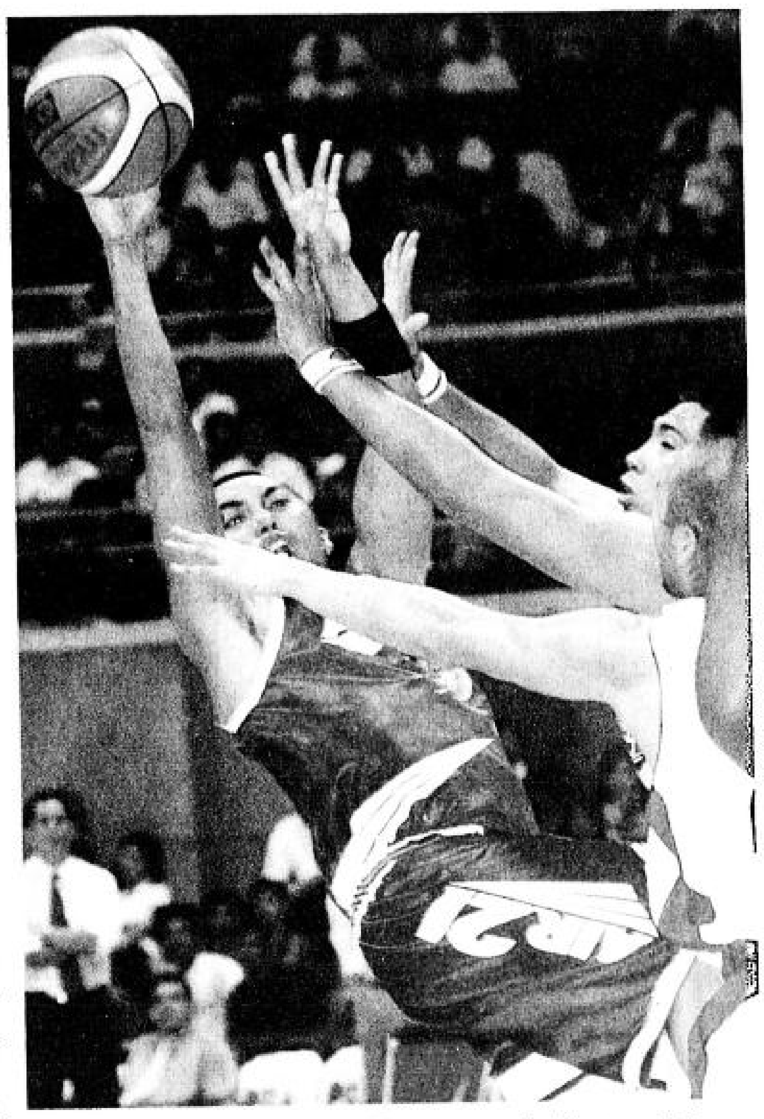
And it was a rest they badly needed. The Beermen played on back-to-back dates to eliminate the Coca-Cola Tigers before facing the Express for Game 1 on the third night.

The winner of the series will meet the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals in a best-of-five quarterfinals.

"It [fatigue] was a factor but mentally, they were tough," said Perasol, who was thrown out in Game

EXPRESS/ A20

GAMES TODAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Air21
7:35 p.m.—Sta. Lucia Realty vs Alaska


AIR21 gunner Renren Ritualo (left) hopes to reprise his team-high output in Game 1 against the wounded Beermen tonight. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Sanz claims PBL's best of week honors

BIG NUMBERS ARE OFTEN EXPECTED from Robert Sanz. As one of the take-charge guys of Hapee-PCU, the 6-foot-2 forward thrives in pressure-packed situations.

Sanz again showed his poise and all-around game when he led the Hapee charge against the seemingly unstoppable Magnolia Wizards in the PBL Heroes Cup last Saturday.

In his finest form this conference, Sanz exploded with 23 points on top of nine rebounds, three assists, one steal and two blocks to lead the Teethmasters to an 81-70 upset of the Wizards.

"One good thing about [Robert] is that he's courageous," said coach Junel Baculi of Sanz, the league's Player of the Week.

Sanz also stepped up on defense, helping limit the production of Magnolia's star duo of Arwind Santos and Kelly Williams to a combined 13 points.

"He was everywhere on the court, giving support to his teammates and motivating them," added Baculi. "He's such a fine leader."

The win kept the Teethmasters in contention for the two outright semifinal berths. The crew tied Montaña at third with 5-4 records. They trail Magnolia (7-2) and Rain or Shine (6-3).

Sanz, the 2004 NCAA Finals Most Valuable Player in PCU's title run, edged nominees Marcy Arellano, Ken Bono and Jay-R Reyes for the weekly citation.

Jasmine W. Payo

RP divers get scholarships, living quarters

By Marc Anthony Reyes

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL DIVING team, toast of the nation for their phenomenal performance in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, will receive yet another reward, this time in the form of scholarships.

The Los Baños-based Trace Computer College, site of the SEAG competition where the divers came away with five gold medals, also offered the athletes living quarters on the campus.

Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph said the divers, led by triple-gold winner Shiela Mae Perez, will be enrolled this school year at the college.

"It's going to be very convenient for them because they don't have to travel to school and train," said Joseph.

Counting the four-gold haul of the swimmers, the Philippines emerged second overall in aquatics behind the crack Singaporeans. Filipinos won five golds in the previous SEAG.

The same scholarship was also offered to the national swimmers, but most of them—including SEAG triple gold medalist Miguel Molina and Miguel Mendoza—are now finishing their studies in the United States.

Unlike the swimmers, however, the divers came mostly from poor districts in Davao City. Among them are SEAG gold medalists siblings Zardo and Ceseil Domenios, Rexel Ryan Fabriga and Kevin Kromwell Kong.

ADDITIONAL BONUS: Shiela Mae Perez (left) and Ceseil Domenios EDWIN BACASMAS

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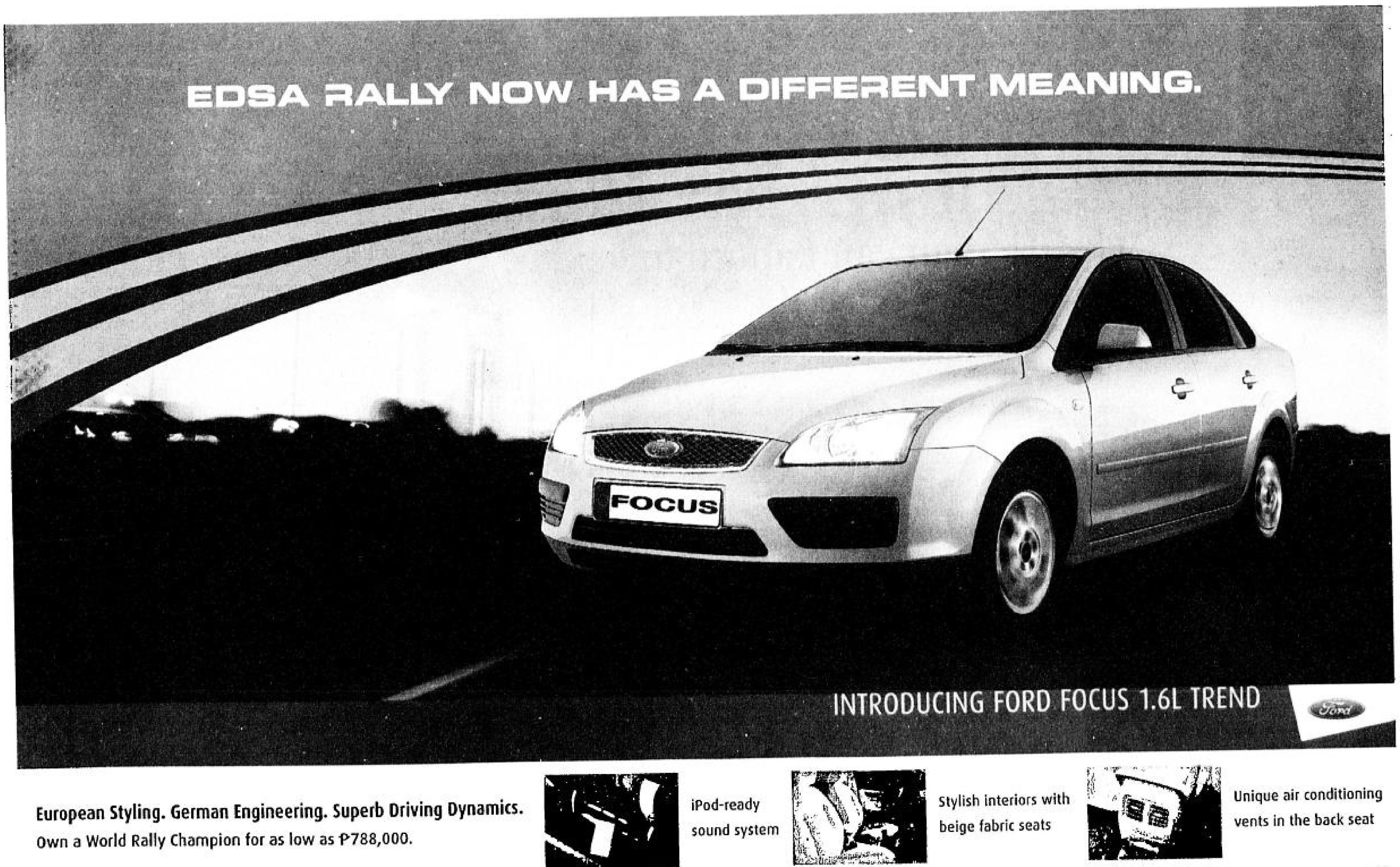

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Juvic opens Asian Tour Q-School bid

PAGUNSAN

JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA—RISING FILIPINO star Juvic Pagunsan hopes to fire off the year by making the grade at the Asian Tour 2006 Qualifying School Final Stage tomorrow.

The Philippines' former No. 1 amateur will be among the 217 golfers that will battle for the 40 Tour cards at stake at the Palm Resort Golf and Country Club in Senai, Johor.

The other notable players include former World Amateur No.1 Michael Sim of Australia and the South African duo of Martin Maritz and Des Terblanche.

Steven Tan and Iain Steel of Malaysia are part of the local team vying for a spot for next season. Steel boasts stints in professional tournaments in the United States over the past five years while Steven finished third in the Malaysian Order of Merit.

Pagunsan, 27, proved his worth as an amateur by bagging numerous titles. His most recent win was the individual gold medal in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games back home.

The champion of the Philippine and Malaysian Amateur Opens also claimed the 2004 Thailand Amateur Championship and finished second in the Singapore Amateur Open in the same year.

After blasting his way past the field at the amateur level, Pagunsan has set himself new targets for 2006.

"I know it will be a totally different ball game when I compete against the pros here," said Pagunsan, who picked up the game at age 13. "This is a crucial stage as I hope to make the top 40.

"My game has been great last year, so I hope to carry on my form."

From the 217 players that will be making their way to the Allamanda Course and Cempaka Course tomorrow, only the top 100 and ties from Round 2 will make it to the third round on Friday. *Asian Tour website*

RP Ladies tilt tees off today

FRANCES Bondad backstops the Philippine challenge.—ROGER MARGALLO

By Musong R. Castillo

WITH THE COURSE PLAYING LONG AND the greens looking unpredictable, two former winners of the Philippine Ladies Amateur Open golf championship believe that any score around par will be good enough to win.

Frances Bondad and Sri Lankan former winner Thuhashini Selvaratnam join 84 others in the annual championship, which plays its 44th edition starting today at the exclusive Manila Golf Club inside Forbes Park.

Predictably, no one sees anyone finishing real low.

"Even par will do it," said Selvaratnam, the 2000 champion and Player of the Year the last five years in the US state of Arizona. "I may be wrong, but after playing my practice round today, this golf course has the potential to be very demanding."

The fairways don't harden that much at this time of the year and organizers have stretched the course to more than 6,000 yards, something which Bondad, the 2004 champ, said will punish many in the field.

"It's playing very long and it's very tough because of the winds," said Bondad, who practiced with former club champion Manoling Chan and four-time World Amateur veteran Alex Prieto. "I wouldn't be surprised if three-over wins it."

Prieto, a member of the RP Team that played in the first-ever staging of the World Am at St. Andrews in Scotland in 1958, gave Bondad valuable tips on the course, even asking the Australia-raised 17-year-old to hit as many as three balls in a hole.

A total of 33 foreign participants, including more than a dozen from Singapore and a sprinkling of Fil-Americans, are in the fold.

Conspicuously absent are players from Thailand who relegated Bondad and the rest of the RP team to the silver medal in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games last month at The Country Club.

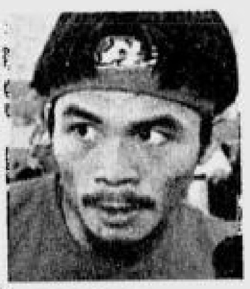
Jayvie Agojo, who defeated Bondad in a gripping final round last year, opted not to gun for a repeat due to pressing academic commitments at Pepperdine University in the US.

Jennifer Rosales, a five-time winner of this event and now a legitimate LPGA star, will hit the ceremonial drive.

Carmelette Villaroman, also a former winner, Lora Roberto and SEAG veteran Anya Tanpinco are the notable homegrown bets in the 54-hole tournament organized by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines.

Sponsors of the tournament are the First Gentleman Foundation, International Container Terminal Services, Inc., Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Sports Commission, Banco de Oro Private Banking, Pacific Online, Gilberto Duavit, Golden Donuts, Philippine Daily Inquirer, TNT Express, Pagcor, Philippine Airlines, Alexis Jewelers, Electrobus Consolidated, Keystone Lamps, Crucible Gallery, All Transport Network, Carlos Palanca and Hyatt Hotels.

Top-flight set of officials for Pacquiao fight


PACQUIAO

AN A-LIST SET OF BOXING OFFICIALS HAS been appointed by the Nevada State Athletic Commission to officiate the slam-bang rematch dubbed "The Battle" between Filipino icon Manny Paquiao and his Mexican nemesis Erik "El Terrible" Morales on Jan. 21 at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

The third man on the ring will be Kenny Bayless of Nevada, best known for handling the Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya superfight in 2002. Bayless also officiated the Randy Suico-Juan Carlos Garcia fight in the same year in Las Vegas.

The judges are Dave Moretti, Jerry Roth and Paul Smith, all of the Nevada commission.

In the undercard's WBA super flyweight showdown between champion Martin Castillo and Alexander Munoz, Hall of Famer Richard Steele, also of Nevada, will call the shots. The judges are Glen Feldman of Connecticut, and Dick Houck and Dalby Shirley of Nevada.

Meanwhile, Jimrex Jaca, the country's super-featherweight champ and the lone Filipino seeing action in the undercard, yesterday found a ray of hope in his quest to secure a US visa.

Jaca is expected to get his visa on his return to the United States Embassy today. The Wakee Salud protegé is scheduled to leave for the US with his manager this Friday. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Why Pacman can't afford to lose

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

THERE WAS A POINT IN THE LAST round of Manny Pacquiao's first fight with Erik Morales last March when the Filipino boxing sensation had appeared very close to scoring a knockdown.

After he opted to slug it out at mid-ring, Morales got tagged hard and was observed to have wobbled, his legs briefly swaying like tossed Chinese noodles.

But the gifted Mexican dug deep, summoned magical reserves to regain footing and come up the winner on points.

That, mind you, is the most gripping, the most saleable detail of Morales-Pacquiao I, the main reason why the Second Encounter has again soared in the charts.

To Pinoy fight devotees, Morales managed to survive only after the final bell interrupted the Pacquiao fusillade.

* * *

So where did Pacquiao take the Pinoy after that?

Up high, of course, close to an emotional Everest.

To this day, there's the prevailing view hereabouts that Pacquiao could have stopped Morales had there been another round left in the bout.

Well, this is already 10 months after Morales had conquered Pacquiao with a masterful combination of craft and guts, but the Pinoy has remained stuck on a cliff of great expectations.

Suspense, the thought of what might have been, continues to whet sporting appetites as Morales-Pacquiao II draws near.

* * *

As proof of an inevitable Pacquiao fever, all the P500 seats in at least two theaters at Rockwell where the fight will be beamed live from Las Vegas have reportedly been sold out.

Promoters call the rematch The Battle, but it's a monumental encounter that has stolen the fancy of Pinoys, including those who can't distinguish between a foul blow and a foul throw.

Other than advanced bookings in various venues, there's a scramble for choice spots, early meals. And, of course, what drinks to serve in preparation for a grand blowout.

Yes, like it or not, there's this growing feeling hereabouts that Pacquiao cannot miss this time out.

Why? Because the Second Encounter, to be staged at the Thomas and Mack Center also in Las Vegas, should be nothing less than a continuation of the interrupted 12th round at MGM Grand last March.

* * *

Wow, wowie! Another 12 rounds when they thought all Pacquiao had needed the last time out was an extra round.

My uncle, Milo Agellon, driving by from a wake for boyhood chum Sancho Geronimo in our barangay, protested and sneered when informed that, in fact, Pacquiao could be caught in a more precarious position in the rematch.

No way, impossible, he mumbled drably. He singled out the bloody cut suffered by Pacquiao in the first fight.

That wound—a result of a headbutt in the fifth round—had definitely hampered Pacquiao's vision and had reportedly pushed him close to calling it quits in the eighth round.

Naturally, there's also this growing sentiment that all Pacquiao has to do this time is stay clear of a headbutt, and victory should be in the bag.

Add to that the expert insistence that Pacquiao, who had charged blindly like a KO-seeking bull in the first fight, would be bringing in better skills into the second fight.

There, indeed, are enough reasons for the Pinoy to get carried away as Pacquiao takes him along on his drive towards greatness and immortality.

It's not very funny what's happening here. What's actually needed is a slug-out, not a boxing bout, if Pacquiao, who lost to a complete boxer the first time, is to triumph.

But, all told, Pacquiao can't really afford to lose again.

That, folks, appears to be the most saleable goad to a dream revenge win by the Pacman.

Eye-popping ticket prices

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

I DIDN'T REALIZE how popular professional wrestling here was until I inquired about ticket prices for the WWE Raw Live Tour, which will be staged at the Araneta Coliseum on Feb. 24.

It so happened that PBA operations head Rickie Santos, one of the guests at the much-belated PBA Press Corps Christmas party held only last Saturday at the Kamayan restaurant in Padre Faura, had a list of ticket prices for the sporting event.

Rickie fished out a scrap of paper with handwritten notes from his wallet and handed it to me. He said I could copy the list but I had to give it back to him.

* * *

He had tried to reserve four ringside tickets for him and his family earlier that day, Rickie explained, only to find out that there was none left. All ringside, patron and lower-box seats were sold out, he was told, and only upper-box tickets were available.

"You should've seen the long queue for tickets. *Ang haba ng pila!*" he said.

Rickie wasn't too sure if he wanted to watch from the upper-box section. But he had an option. The ticket clerk told him that due to insistent public demand, the organizers decided to hold a second performance on Feb. 25.

Although the tickets for that day were still not in the market, 50 percent of the total was already reserved. That supposedly includes Ricky's four.

Only, I wasn't sure if he still insisted on ringside seats, because when I took a look at the scrap of paper, my eyes nearly popped out. Ringside seats sold at P10,440 apiece!

My eyes panned the rest of the figures: Patron A, P 5,220; Patron B, P3,654; lower box P3,446; upper box A, P2,088; and upper box B P940.

* * *

"Wow! And you say these are all sold out?" I found the need to reconfirm with Rickie.

"Sold out, with the demand unfulfilled. As I said, I was at the ticket office the other day. *Ang haba-haba ng pila*," said Rickie, explaining that the tickets had to be structured this way because the organizers had spent P30 million to bring professional wrestling to the Philippines.

"And *puro* big names *ang dadating*."

Gosh, so now what do I tell my 11-year-old girl—a wrestling fanatic, would you believe!—who has been badgering me to bring her to the show.

* * *

In-between the announcement of raffle prize winners, the discussions in our long, long table at the PBA Press Corps Christmas party revolved around an assortment of subjects, both trivial and significant. Like why Mike Keon was dropped from the Asian Games preparation, along with other big-name consultants like Lydia de Vega and Onyok Velasco; whether or not the PBA had the right to sanction La Salle Green Archer Joseph Yeo, if and when he joins the pro league, for that hacking incident against Red Bull's Enrico Villanueva during the Ateneo-La Salle Dream Game staged by Vintage's Bobong Velez last month; and many others.

Although the PSC said it was a cost-cutting move because the 2006 budget would be slashed drastically, many of my colleagues felt there was another reason why Keon was plucked out of the Asian Games. They blamed the green-eyed monster for this.

On the major issues, nothing was resolved. Even the Yeo issue was left open-ended. The PBA's Perry Martinez argued that commissioner Noli Eala had the right to impose sanctions on the cager if and when he applies for the PBA draft. La Salle alumnus Virgil Villavicencio thought that would be going against human rights.

Express, Aces go . . .

From page A19

1 for loudly disputing a dubious call. "They are the champions and play on a high level. What we must do is come out a notch higher."

Alaska will also go for a sweep in its series against Sta. Lucia Realty after escaping with a double-overtime victory through the heroics of Mike Cortez in Game 1.

"Sta. Lucia is really solid, and on any given night, the Realtors could play very well and beat you," said Alaska coach Tim Cone, whose Aces are looking to meet Red Bull Barako in the quarterfinals.

The Aces were booted out by the Barako in the quarterfinals last conference despite winning Game 1.

Perasol was summoned yesterday to explain his outburst against the referees. PBA commissioner Noli Eala and technical chief Perry Martinez fined Perasol P13,000—P8,000 for the double technical and P5,000 for his outburst.

"I don't think they did it on purpose but at that particular moment, we got the raw end of the call," said Perasol, the first and only Air21 franchise coach who has led the team to at least nine victories in the elimination round.

"I apologize for my reaction," he added. "It was not proper. But if it made us a better team, then I will do it again." *June Navarro*

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Odyssey (6), Hidalgo (3), Summer Rain (2), Long Nose Hawk (5)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Kai Maki (8), Tigres In Action (2), Cheers (3), Jewelmer (5)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Million Dollar (1), Eye Candy (2), Real Black (6) Sambat (8)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Snow Princess (7), Look Of Love (6), Empire Lady (3), Angel Eyes (4)
Race 5—(Penta/Tri)—Raven (13), Prima Vera (2), Rockwell (12), Friendly Venture (1), Five O'CLock
Race 6—(Penta/Tri)—Four Belles (11), Tomoko Rirei (7), Carlito's Way (10), Rock N' Roll (12), Paige (5)
Race 7—(Penta/Tri)—Strong Colony (9), Batang Kalookan (7), Hurry Prince (11), Wild Orphan (7), Royal Rose (3)
Race 8—(Qrt/Tri)—Boxster (6), Flaming Heart (3), Cartada Nueve (8), Sir Guguy (1)
Race 9—S6/Qrt/Tri)—Tell Henry (7), My Lady Hannah (10), Beautiful Task (6), Mas Que Nada (12), Stradivarius (3), Open Sky (11)

SPORTSWATCH

NCA finals today at SJC

QUALITY fights are lined up today in the championship round of the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-cock derby at the San Juan Coliseum, with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Only three entries from a field of 33 remained unbeaten with three wins each after last Monday's elimination round. They are Pichay Spartan 2 of Rep. Butch Pichay and Rey Briones, Gold Cup Sundance of William Go and Danny Valero and Firefly 14 Mulawin Colorado of Jun Santiago, Rudy Albano and Frankie Uy. For inquiries, call 725-5369 or 0917-8041691.

Makati 3-cocker gets going

FIFTY fights are on tap in a special 3-cock derby today at the Makati Coliseum. A cash pot of P150,000 is at stake in the derby hosted by the WTJ group of Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co. Paying patrons can get tickets at only P200. Also slated at the venue is the FTE Happy Gamefarms 4-cock derby tomorrow with P300,000 up for grabs.

Tribu rips Valencia for crown

VALENCIA CITY—TRIBU SUGBU WHIPPED host Valencia Golden Harvest, 73-62, Monday to capture the 5th Day Chärter Open Invitational basketball crown here.

Alex Cainglet and Doroteo Almacin combined for 32 points to power the Tribesmen of Lito Gillamac and Mario King to their second straight title in the Nature's Spring-NBC pre-season series supported by Sulpicio Lines, Spring Cooking Oil, Molten and Prime Channel.

The Skygo/Sirlitz-backed Tribesmen's win was a fitting follow up to their first pre-season victory in Antipolo last month.

Almacin won the most valuable player award and joined Christian Nicdao, Ronald Bucao, North Cotabato's Marvin Martinez and Pagadian's Ping Daja in the mythical five.

Mayor Sammy Co's Pagadian Explorers nipped Gov. Manny Piñol's North Cotabato Braves, 78-76, to finish third.

The scores:

First Game

PAGADIAN 78—Sinco 16, Naron 12, Isidro 11, Coldura 9, Saludsod 8, Dayota 6, Quilo 5, Ayuk 4, Daja 3, Marata 2, Singidas 2, Cortez 0.

NORTH COTABATO 76—Ligue 22, Coronado 11, Clar 10, Reyes 9, Martinez 9, Jawod 6, Dagatan 4, Binas 3, Cabanog 2, Sansaet 0.

Quarters: 16-21, 40-36, 62-53, 78-76.

Second Game

TRIBU 73—Cainglet 20, Almacin 12, Nicdao 11, Ursal 10, Ducay 8, Yabut 5, Bucao 2, Sevilla 2, Calo 2, Mercado 1, Butel 0, Luga 0.

VALENCIA 62—Cruz 12, Clavel 10, Braga 9, Navales 8, Ayson 6, Berami 5, Cabili 5, Taligatos 4, Numeran 3, Cesar 0, Adams 0, Celiz 0.

Quarters: 23-16, 39-37, 60-54, 73-62.

Kobe milestone lifts Lakers

LOS ANGELES—KOBE Bryant became the first player in more than 41 years to score 45 or more points in four consecutive games in guiding the Los Angeles Lakers to a 96-90 win over the Indiana Pacers at the Staples Center on Monday.

Bryant has been on a dazzling run and registered 45, 48 and 50-point performances in his three games leading up to Monday's clash and reached the 45-point plateau again when he nailed two free throws with 10 seconds left on the clock.

The NBA scoring leader becomes the first player since Wilt Chamberlain in November 1964 to string together four consecutive 45-point games.

The Lakers needed nearly every point with Lamar Odom the only other Los Angeles player to reach double figures, hitting for 17 points and 12 rebounds.

INDIANA tried everything against the Lakers' Kobe Bryant (left), including hard fouls from the likes of Dennis Harrison. But the LA star was simply unstoppable. REUTERS

Kwame Brown chipped in with nine points and nine rebounds as the Lakers extended their winning run to three and moved two games above .500.

Jermaine O'Neal had 24 points and 16 rebounds in the loss for the Pacers.

In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson scored 41 points, dished out nine assists and pulled down seven rebounds to lift the 76ers to a 107-98 home victory over the Seattle SuperSonics.

The explosive point guard has registered 40 or more points on eight occasions this season and he helped provide a happy homecoming for the 76ers following a gruelling seven-game road trip that produced just two wins.

Iverson got plenty of support from John Salmons, who contributed 18 points to the Philadelphia effort while Kyle Korver chipped in with 17 points and Andre Iguodala 16.

Ray Allen paced the SuperSonics with 27 points while Vladimir Radmanovic had 15 points and 12 rebounds as Seattle slumped to their third straight defeat.

In other games, Kirk Hinrich had 25 points to lead the Chicago Bulls past the Toronto Raptors 113-104; Jerry Stackhouse hit the game-winning jumper with less than a second to play to give the Dallas Mavericks a 104-102 victory over the Boston Celtics and Mehmet Okur scored 19 points as the Utah Jazz beat the Washington Wizards 97-89. *Reuters*

NBA on TV: New Jersey vs San Antonio (live at 9:30 a.m., replay at 5:30 p.m., Solar Sports); New York vs Cleveland (8 a.m. live, 7:30 p.m. replay, Sports Plus) and Phoenix vs Denver (9:30 p.m., Sports Plus)

Ivanovic carves upset, ousts Mauresmo

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—SECOND-SEEDED Amelie Mauresmo was bounced out of the Sydney International with a 6-3, 7-5 second-round loss to Ana Ivanovic of Serbia-Montenegro on Tuesday.

Mauresmo, in her first match since winning the season-ending WTA Championship in November, struggled with her own serve and Ivanovic's booming forehand.

The No. 3-ranked Mauresmo got less than 40 percent of first serves into play and was broken five times.

She said a lack of match practice counted against her, but credited Ivanovic's forehand for the outcome.

"I think it's at the level with the biggest hitters in the women's game," said Mauresmo. "She's hitting it pretty hard and also is capable of really hiding it well—that's her biggest weapon."

Belgians Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin-Hardenne advanced in straight sets to the quarterfinals.

Top-seeded Clijsters beat China's Li Na, 6-3, 6-1, in 53 minutes, and the fifth-seeded Henin-Hardenne cruised past Russia's Vera Dushevina, 6-2, 6-2, in 55 minutes. *AP*

IVANOVIC AP

PSA invites top sportsmen for Awards

PROMINENT SPORTSMEN AND OTHER friends of local sports have been invited to the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) Annual Awards Night this Saturday at the Manila Pavilion.

Frank Elizalde, the International Olympic Committee's representative to the Philippines, San Miguel Corp. boss Danding Cojuangco and Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella are among the sportsmen expected to grace the two-hour show honoring the big achievers of 2005.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is gracing the awards as special guest and will award the Athlete of the Year award to Team Philippines, to be assisted by Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco and Philippine Sports Commission chair William Ramirez.

Diver Shiela Mae Perez will receive the award on behalf of the athletes who made up Team Philippines, which garnered the award in a tribute to its historic triumphant campaign in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

PSA president Jimmy Cantor said invitations are now being distributed. He added that honorees who won't get their invitations may get them instead at the reception area of the Grand Ballroom during the awards rites which start at 7:30 p.m.

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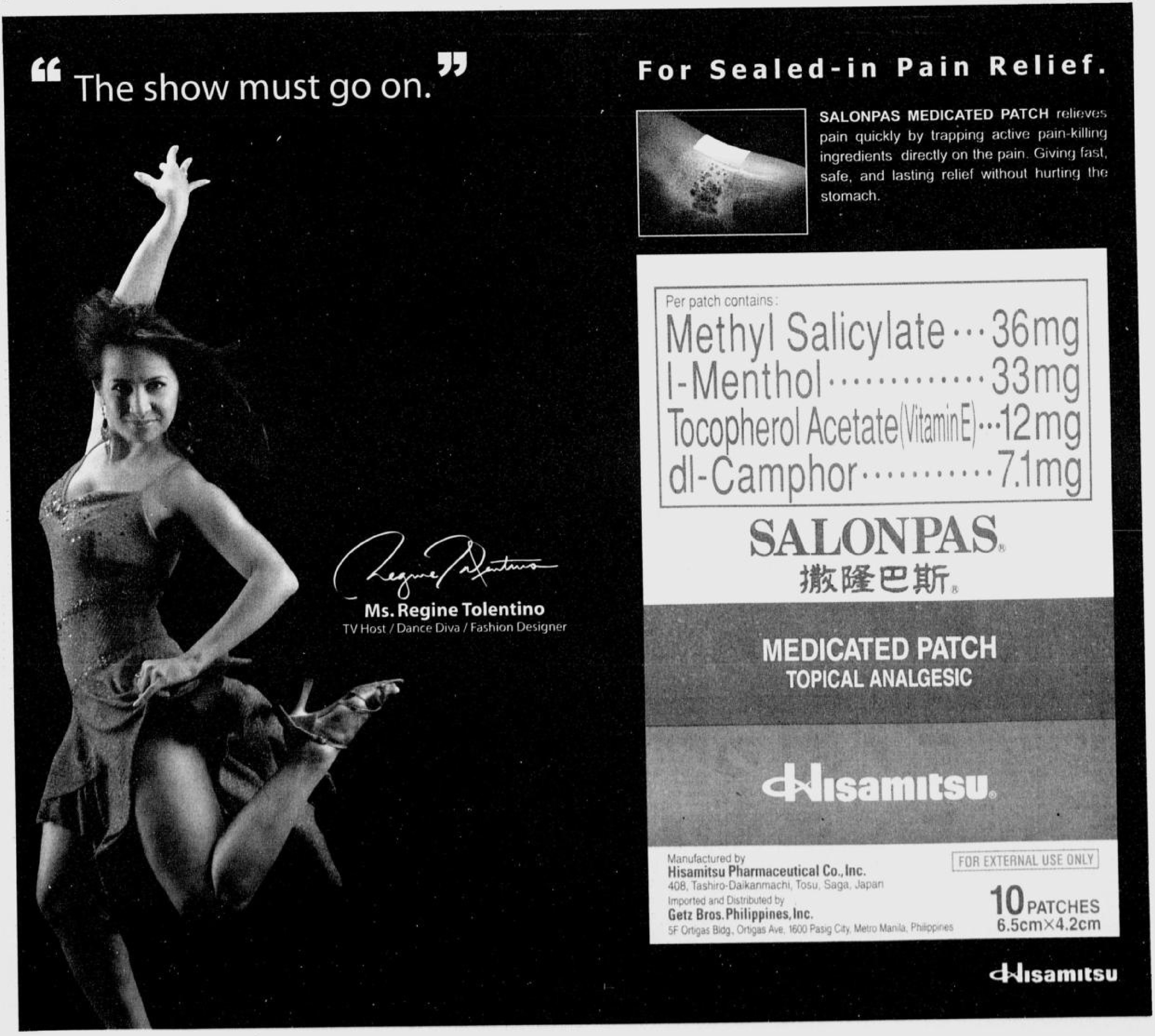

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TV Host / Dance Diva / Fashion Designer

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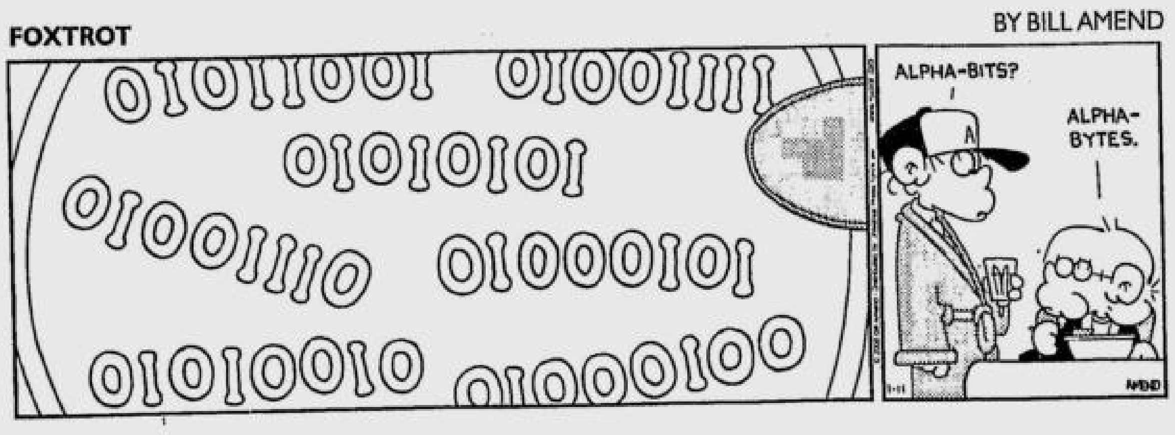
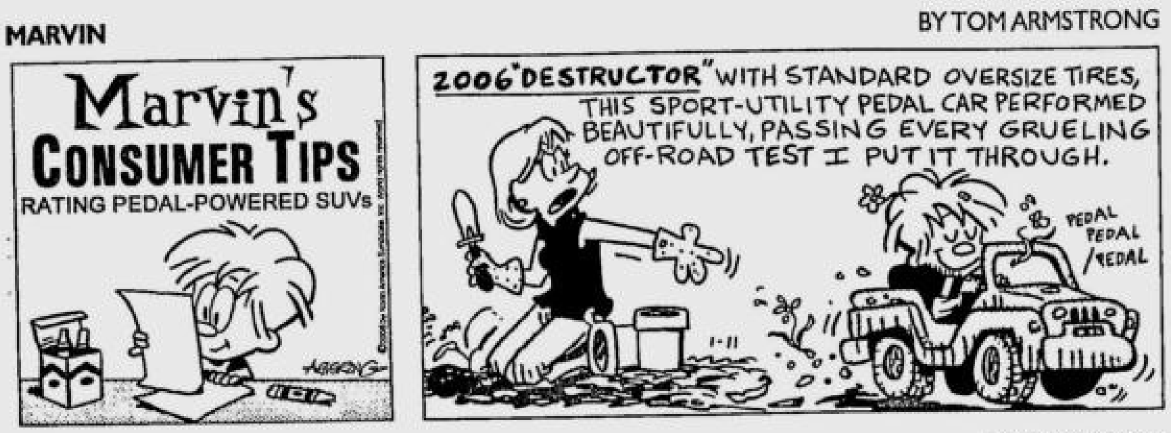
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


01011001 01001111
01010101
01001110 01000101
01010010 01000100
ALPHA-BITS?
ALPHA-BYTES.

MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG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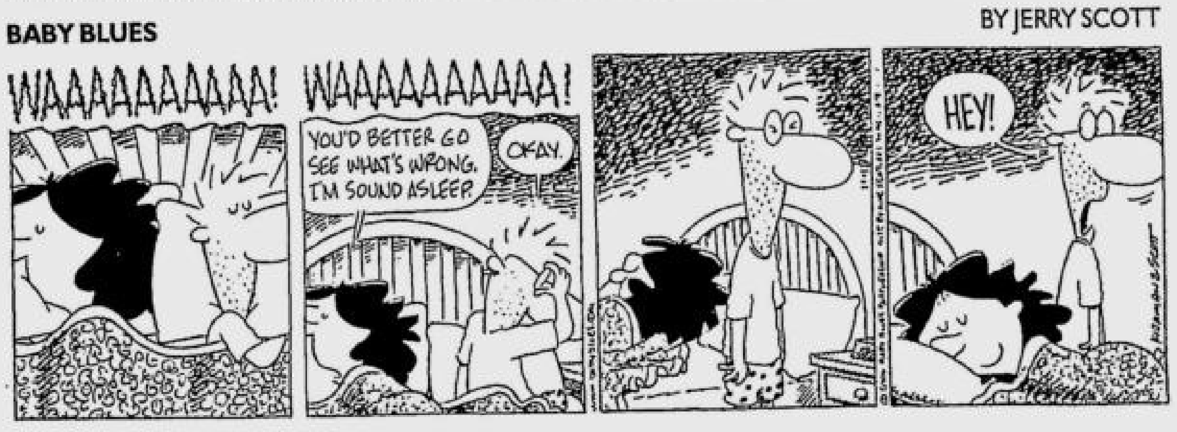
2006 "DESTRUCTOR" WITH STANDARD OVERSIZE TIRES, THIS SPORT-UTILITY PEDAL CAR PERFORMED BEAUTIFULLY, PASSING EVERY GRUELING OFF-ROAD TEST I PUT IT THROUGH.
PEDAL PEDAL PEDAL

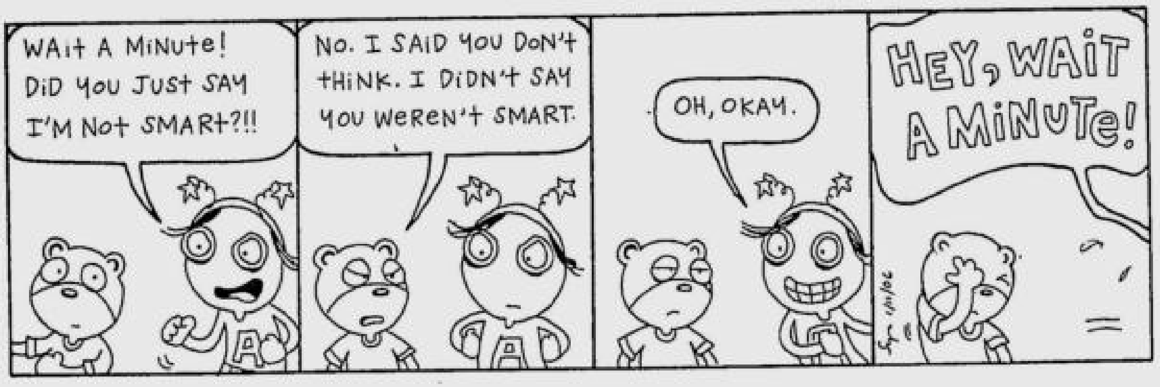
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WAAAAAAAAAA!
WAAAAAAAAAAA!
YOU'D BETTER GO SEE WHAT'S WRONG. I'M SOUND ASLEEP.
OKAY.
HEY!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WAit A MiNute! DiD YOU JUST SAY I'M NOt SMARt?!!
NO. I SAID YOU DON'T tHiNK. I DIDN'T SAY YOU WEREN'T SMART.
OH, OKAY.
HEY, WAiT A MiNUTe!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a strong-willed, resourceful, capable individual. There is little you cannot do. You're an excellent judge of people; plus you're organized. This combination allows you to produce events and situations. You get things done! You have strong principles. In the year ahead, you will have to give up something, as you finish a nine-year cycle.

Birthdate of: Amanda Peet, actress; Mary J. Blige, singer; Rod Taylor, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might want to urge somebody to agree with you about something today. You're sure you're right (and you probably are). However, resist your impulse to get into an argument.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your possessions matter to you. You're a fine collector, and you value good things. Today you might be obsessed about buying something, or reconditioning or refinishing it.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today, the Moon is in your sign, but it opposes Big Daddy Pluto. This is a classic setup for arguments and ego conflicts. You want to improve someone; someone wants to improve you. (Nobody likes this.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're a feeler. Basically, you go through life driving by the seat of your pants. Today you feel uneasy and intense about something. Just let it go.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might encounter somebody who is hot and bothered about something. Use your easygoing, friendly style to handle this individual.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Don't tangle with bosses and parents today. You'll probably lose. It's always best to choose your fights. Wait until something really matters to you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Others are excited about political, religious or educational matters. Just listen to people. Let them air their views. You don't have to agree; you don't have to disagree.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're face to face with somebody with a different set of values from yours. Always remember that you are quite an intimidating sign, even if you don't think so. Go gently.

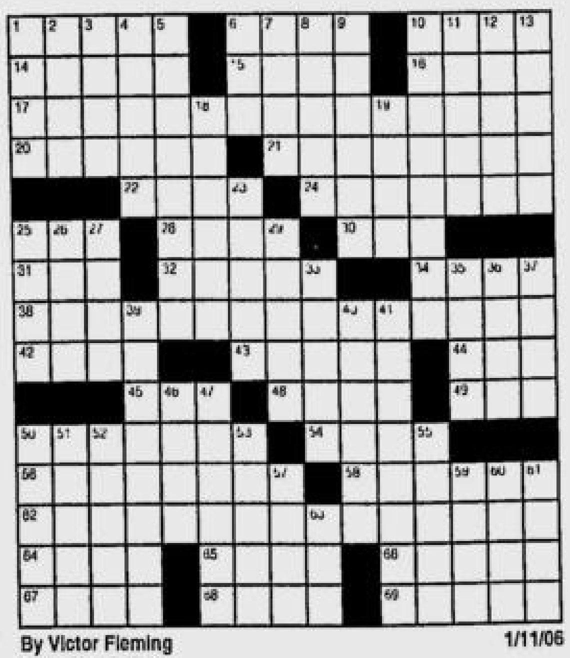
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't let disagreements with loved ones and partners get in the way of the bigger picture. People feel a bit obsessed about things today. Is it worth getting upset over?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You have good ideas about how to make improvements to your job or your work area. Nevertheless, be open to what others have to say.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Romance is passionate, intense and perplexing today. Don't make important decisions. Your thinking isn't as clear as it can be on other days. (If you end up with egg on your face, keep the ketchup handy.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be patient with family members today, especially parents. Remember, we only get upset with those we love. Don't make a big deal out of things. Relax.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Victor Fleming
Little Rock, AR

1/11/06

ACROSS

1 Put into office
6 Sail support
10 Decide not to swing
14 At this point
15 Amo, ___, amat...
16 Composer Khachaturian
17 SETI question
20 Closer
21 Put into financial difficulties
22 Fruit drinks
24 London district
25 Industrial container
28 Dressy event
30 Greek letter
31 Ratite bird
32 Lord Byron's Muse
34 Spanish water
38 Just between us
42 Oslo's river
43 Actress Uta
44 Fisherman's profit?
45 Audit-taker's letters
48 Senator Cochran of Mississippi
49 Sing-along syllable
50 Colony of social climbers?
54 Chicagoland paper
56 Address
58 Way out
62 I'm not the only one
64 South African grassland
65 Golfer Aoki
66 Skirt
67 Building wings
68 Zaire's Mobuto Sese ___
69 Earthquake

DOWN

1 Israel's Abba
2 "Flashdance" director Adrian
3 "Book of Days" singer
4 Hooded reptile
5 Doubly dangerous
6 Jersey cape
7 Hebrew prophet
8 Fry briefly
9 Shoe style
10 Papeete man
11 Sharp-crested ridge
12 Black of "Five Easy Pieces"
13 Correct text
18 Dismal
19 Soviet news agcy.
23 Cut sharply
25 ___ cava
26 Out of control
27 Hollow cylinder
29 Ready for the pitch
33 Relative of should
35 Chap
36 Exploiter
37 Charles barker
39 Apple groves
40 Burned a bit
41 Dark blues
46 Compassion
47 Excuses
50 Motrin rival
51 Innovative
52 Immune system element
53 Untethered
55 Short-vowel symbol
57 Sask. neighbor
59 Actor Morales
60 Caesar and Vicious
61 Watch winder
63 Hoo leader?

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	A	L	E	M	■	E	R	I	C	■	V	E	S	T
A	M	A	N	A	■	D	U	S	E	■	O	L	E	O
G	O	O	D	N	I	G	H	T	L	A	D	I	E	S
E	S	S	■	D	O	E	R	■	L	A	K	E	R	S
■	■	■	E	R	N	S	■	S	A	R	A	■	■	■
D	R	A	M	A	S	■	W	A	R	P	■	D	E	S
R	U	B	I	K	■	F	I	L	E	■	B	E	L	A
A	F	A	R	E	W	E	L	L	T	O	A	R	M	S
P	U	T	S	■	I	N	D	Y	■	N	A	M	E	S
E	S	E	■	O	D	D	S	■	B	L	E	A	R	Y
■	■	■	U	K	E	S	■	C	L	O	D	■	■	■
O	L	D	M	A	N	■	S	H	O	O	■	T	A	I
B	Y	E	B	Y	E	B	L	A	C	K	B	I	R	D
O	N	C	E	■	R	O	A	R	■	E	E	R	I	E
E	N	O	L	■	S	O	B	S	■	R	E	E	D	S

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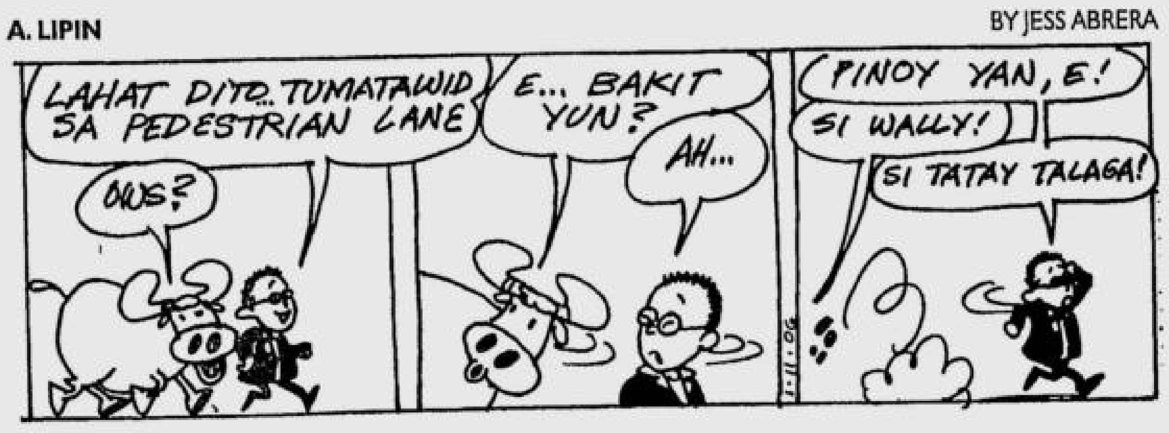
1/11/06

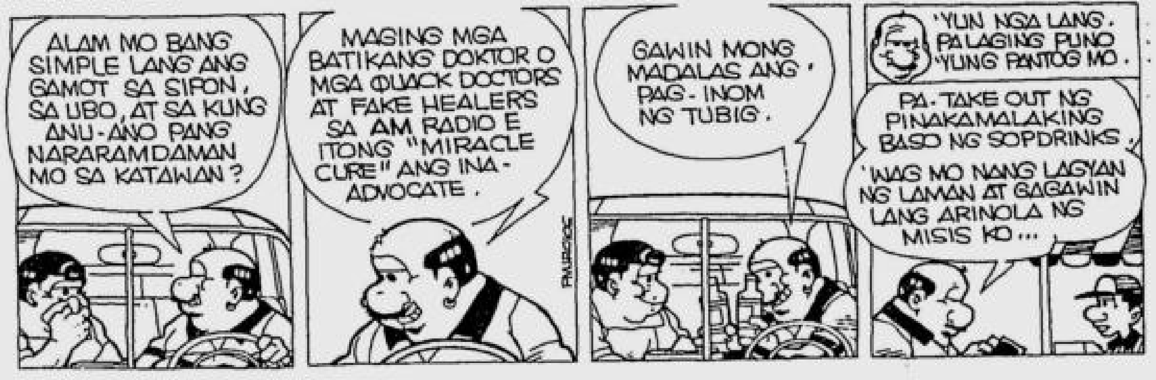
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


LAHAT DITO... TUMATAWID SA PEDESTRIAN LANE
OWS?
E... BAKIT YUN?
AH...
PINOY YAN, E!
SI WALLY!
SI TATAY TALAGA!

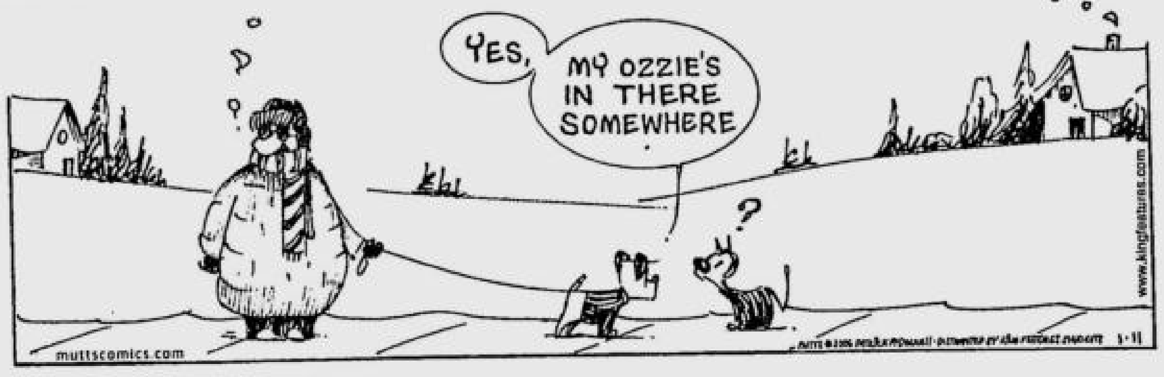
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ALAM MO BANG SIMPLE LANG ANG GAMOT SA SIPON, SA UBO, AT SA KUNG ANU-ANO PANG NARARAMDAMAN MO SA KATAWAN?
MAGING MGA BATIKANG DOKTOR O MGA QUACK DOCTORS AT FAKE HEALERS SA AM RADIO E ITONG "MIRACLE CURE" ANG INA-ADVOCATE.
GAWIN MONG MADALAS ANG PAG-INOM NG TUBIG.
'YUN NGA LANG. PALAGING PUNO 'YUNG PANTOG MO.
PA-TAKE OUT NG PINAKAMALAKING BASO NG SOPDRINKS.
'WAG MO NANG LAGYAN NG LAMAN AT GAGAWIN LANG ARINOLA NG MISIS KO...

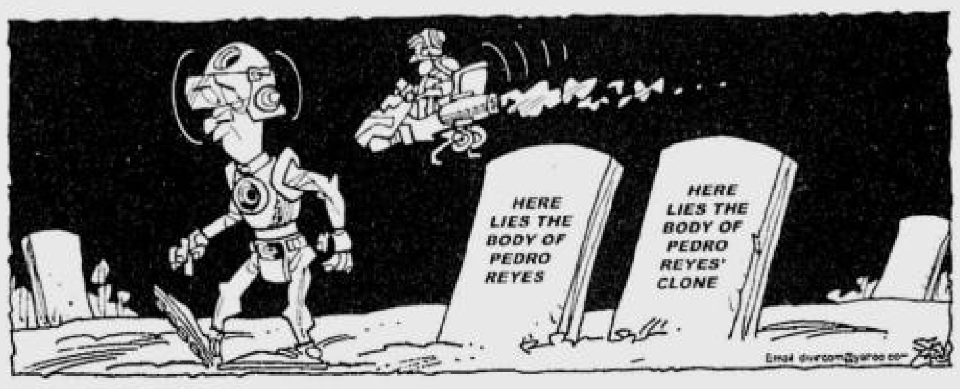
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


YES,
MY OZZIE'S IN THERE SOMEWHERE
muttscomics.com

DIVINE COMEDY

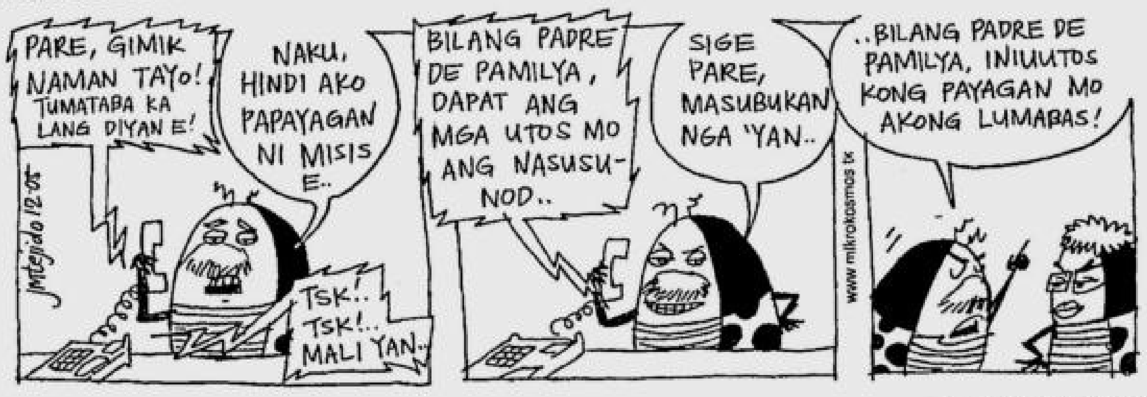
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HERE LIES THE BODY OF PEDRO REYES
HERE LIES THE BODY OF PEDRO REYES' CLONE

MANILA NORTH CEMETERY, CIRCA 2087

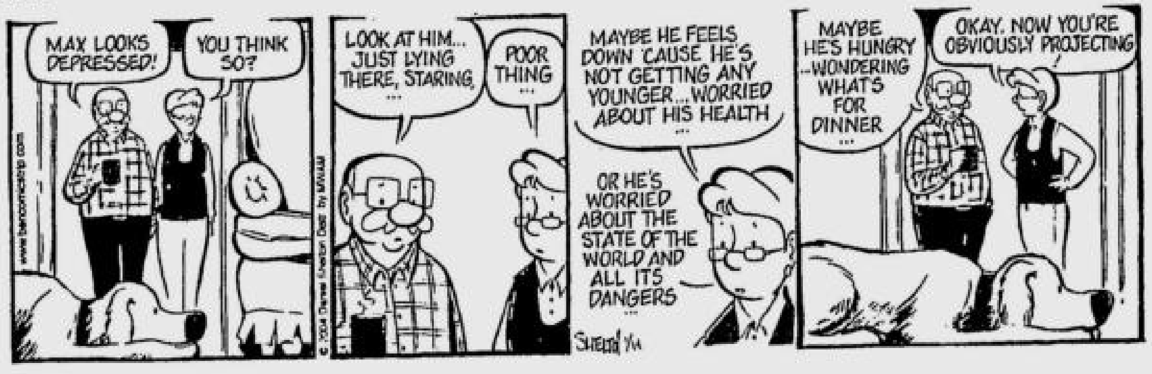
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PARE, GIMIK NAMAN TAYO! TUMATABA KA LANG DIYAN E!
NAKU, HINDI AKO PAPAYAGAN NI MISIS E..
TSK!.. TSK!.. MALI YAN..
BILANG PADRE DE PAMILYA, DAPAT ANG MGA UTOS MO ANG NASUSUNOD..
SIGE PARE, MASUBUKAN NGA 'YAN..
..BILANG PADRE DE PAMILYA, INIUUTOS KONG PAYAGAN MO AKONG LUMABAS!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

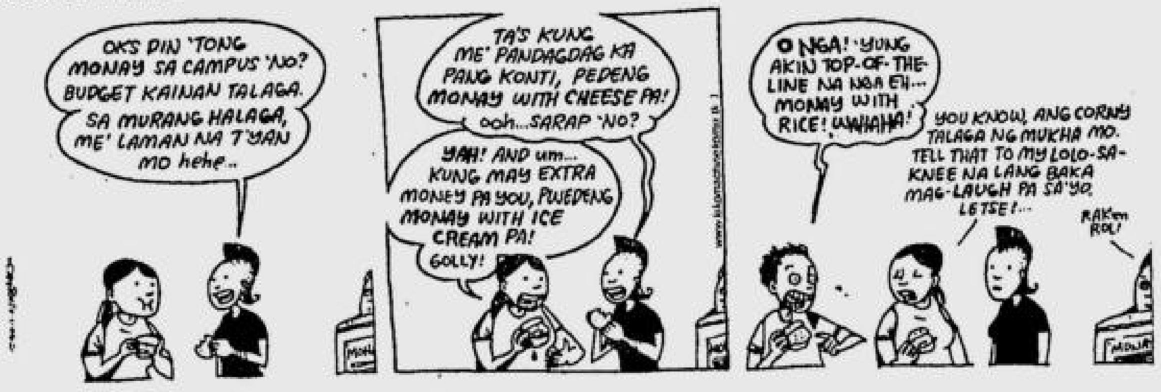
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


MAX LOOKS DEPRESSED!
YOU THINK SO?
LOOK AT HIM... JUST LYING THERE, STARING...
POOR THING...
MAYBE HE FEELS DOWN 'CAUSE HE'S NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER... WORRIED ABOUT HIS HEALTH...
OR HE'S WORRIED ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD AND ALL ITS DANGERS...
MAYBE HE'S HUNGRY ...WONDERING WHAT'S FOR DINNER...
OKAY. NOW YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY PROJECTING

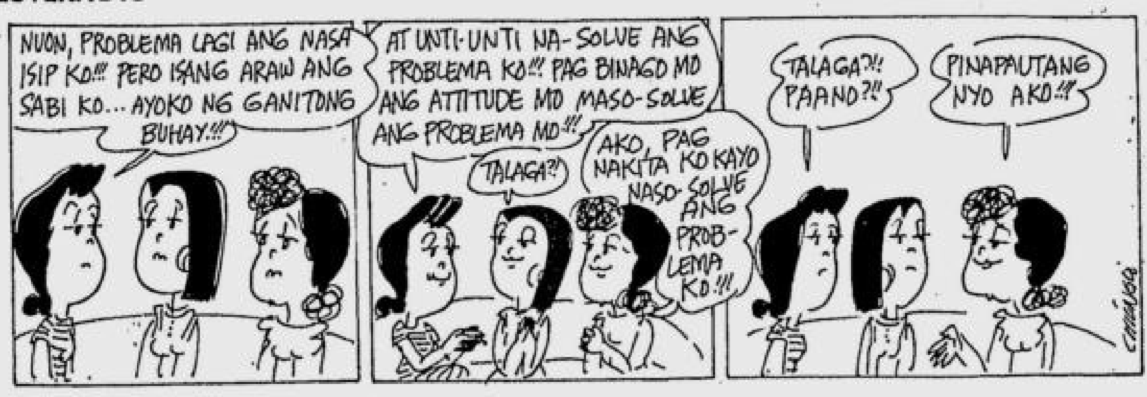
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


OKS DIN 'TONG MONAY SA CAMPUS 'NO? BUDGET KAINAN TALAGA.
SA MURANG HALAGA, ME' LAMAN NA T'YAN MO hehe..
TA'S KUNG ME' PANDAGDAG KA PANG KONTI, PEDENG MONAY WITH CHEESE PA!
ooh...SARAP 'NO?
YAH! AND um... KUNG MAY EXTRA MONEY PA YOU, PUEDENG MONAY WITH ICE CREAM PA! GOLLY!
O NGA! 'YUNG AKIN TOP-OF-THE-LINE NA NGA EH... MONAY WITH RICE! UWIAHA!
YOU KNOW, ANG CORNY TALAGA NG MUKHA MO. TELL THAT TO MY LOLO-SA-KNEE NA LANG BAKA MAG-LAUGH PA SA'YO. LETSE!...
RAKen ROL!

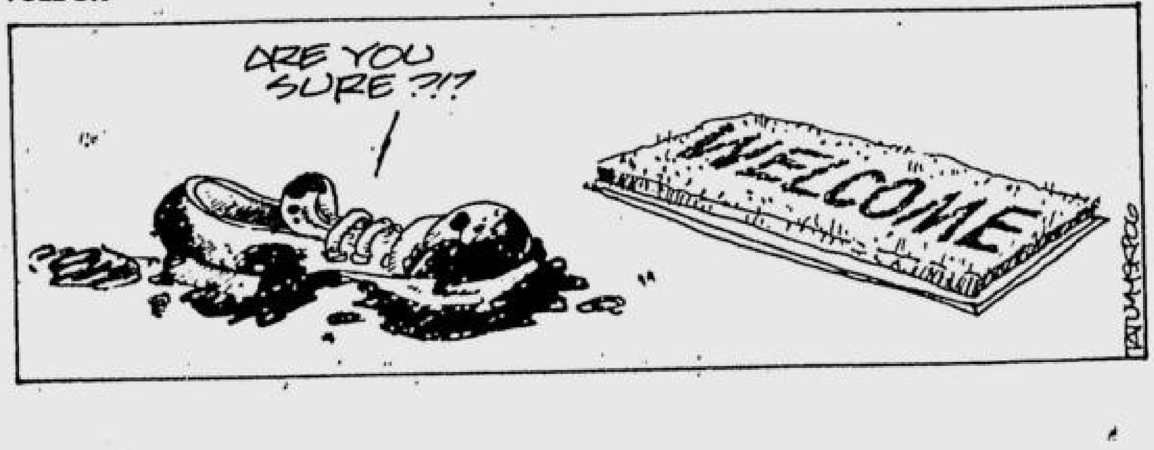
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NUON, PROBLEMA LAGI ANG NASA ISIP KO!!! PERO ISANG ARAW ANG SABI KO... AYOKO NG GANITONG BUHAY!!!
AT UNTI-UNTI NA-SOLVE ANG PROBLEMA KO!!! PAG BINAGO MO ANG ATTITUDE MO MASO-SOLVE ANG PROBLEMA MO!!!
TALAGA?!
AKO, PAG NAKITA KO KAYO NASO-SOLVE ANG PROBLEMA KO!!!
TALAGA?!! PAANO?!!
PINAPAUTANG NYO AKO!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ARE YOU SURE?!?
WELCOME

SOFTER AND WHITER.
HAIR-FREE UNDERARMS.
Call the Facial Care Centre for LaserLight
892 SKIN (7546)

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

BOY2 Quizon in "Mulawin"

FDCP, CEB stand by 'A' given to 'Mulawin'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FILM DEVELOPMENT Council of the Philippines (FDCP) and Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB) head Rolando "Jackie" Atienza has defended the A grade received by the movie "Mulawin," following protests over the recent Metro Manila Film Festival awards.

Annabel Rama, mother and manager of "Mulawin" lead star Richard Gutierrez, complained in a TV interview about what she perceived as a snub by the MMFF jury.

She said it was "anomalous" for the GMA 7-Regal Entertainment entry not to win a single award when it was graded A by the CEB.

The evaluation is based on quality. An A fetches a 100 percent amusement tax rebate for a movie. Because "Mulawin" is a festival entry, it can only avail of the rebate after the MMFF run.

In a phone interview, Atienza told Inquirer Entertainment that "Mulawin" deserved the A, but added that he respected the jury's decision. "[However] since the MMFF board of judges and the CEB were not composed of the same people, differences in opinion were inevitable," he explained.

Atienza described "Mulawin" as a "well-crafted" film. "The story is well-defined and the direction and cinematography were also handled well," he said.

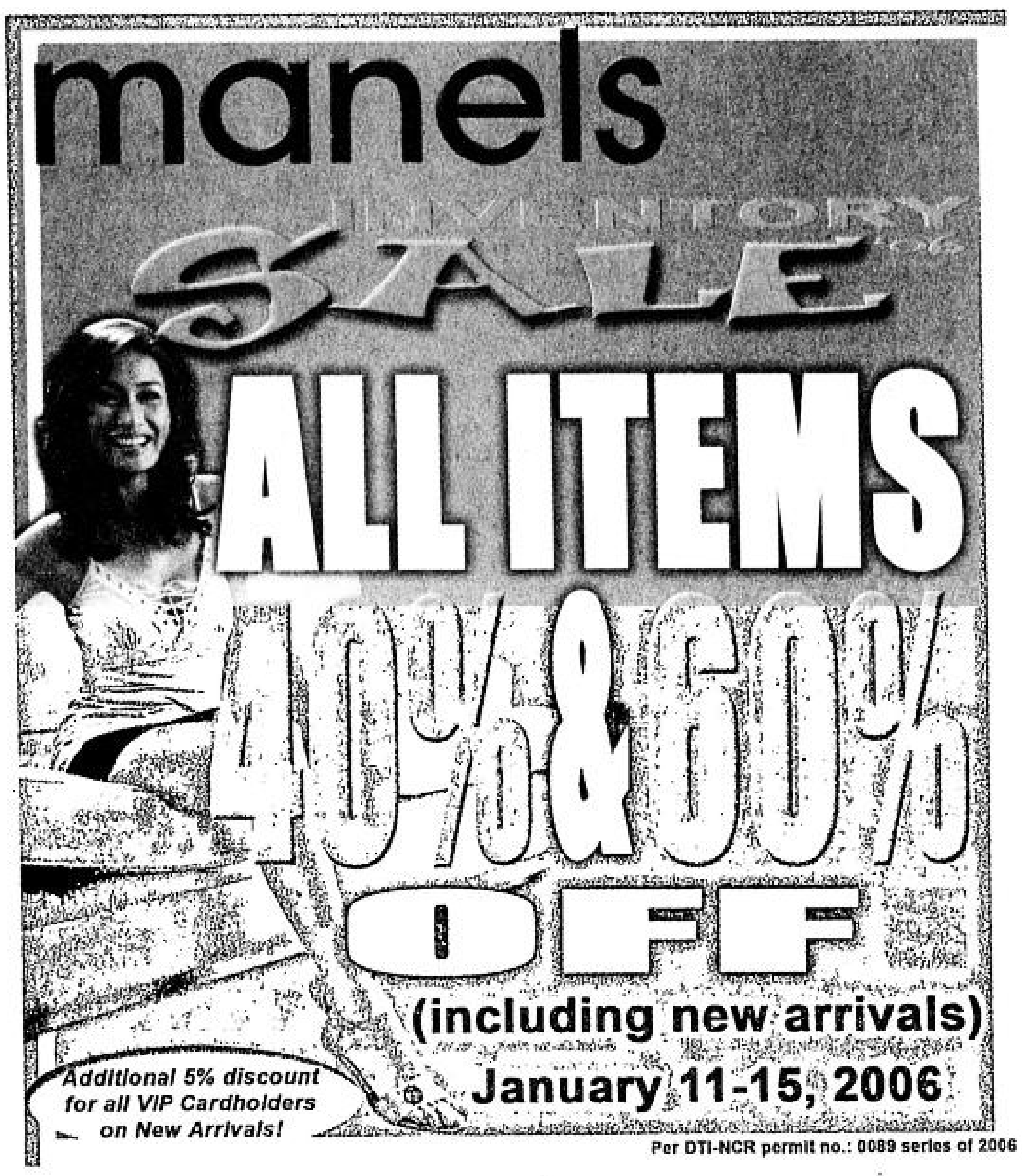
Big leap

Based on the MMFF entries that the CEB screened, Atienza declared "a marked improvement in Filipino movies." The industry has surely made a big leap forward, he said, "in terms of quality, compared to the movies we used to make in the 1970s and 1980s. The MMFF movies 'Mulawin,' 'Exodus' and 'Blue Moon' are pretty good."

According to Atienza, "Blue Moon" and "Exodus," MMFF Best Picture and Second Best Picture respectively, both got a B grade. "Ako Legal Wife," another entry, also got a B. This carries a 65 percent amusement tax rebate.

"I think we can now compete internationally," he said. "But we have to do it slowly and more efficiently. We can start by exporting our films to our Southeast Asian neighbors."

INSIDE
■ All eyes on the latest Juday-Piolo starrer VIEWFINDER/ A2-4
■ Joaquin Phoenix at Folsom State Prison /A2-2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Cash at last ... but not for winners

CHEER FACTOR

IN AN E-MAIL TO Inquirer ENTERTAINment last Sunday, independent filmmaker Paolo Villaluna relayed the message that the non-winning finalists in the local digital competition of last October's Cinemanila International Film Festival would finally receive their prizes. The checks were "made available" last Friday, he said.

The development was confirmed by Arles Jimenez, officer-in-charge of the Tourism and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the City of Manila, major sponsor of the film fest. "[They] can now claim their checks worth P100,000 each," Jimenez said.

As for the winners' cash prizes amounting to P3.25 million, Jimenez said city hall was "working on it." *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

Gag order for juror who gave forecast?

By Marinel R. Cruz

OFFICIALS OF THE METRO Manila Film Festival (MMFF) reportedly banned juror and executive committee member Wilson Tieng from disclosing more information about the festival, two days after a participating producer accused the MMFF judges of dishonesty.

An MMFF official who requested anonymity told Inquirer Entertainment that Tieng's "gag order" took effect on Monday and would end today.

Tieng, also a member of the MMFF selection committee, is the subject of a complaint filed on Saturday by Regal Entertainment producer Lily Monteverde, who said the jurors were "partial" to Canary Films' "Kutob."

TIENG

A day before the Jan. 5 awards ceremony, Tieng was quoted in a forecast—in print and on radio and TV—of the winners. He predicted that "Kutob" lead star Marvin Agustin would win Best Actor and its director Joey Reyes, Best Director. They did.

"I expressed my personal opinions," Tieng said on Saturday.

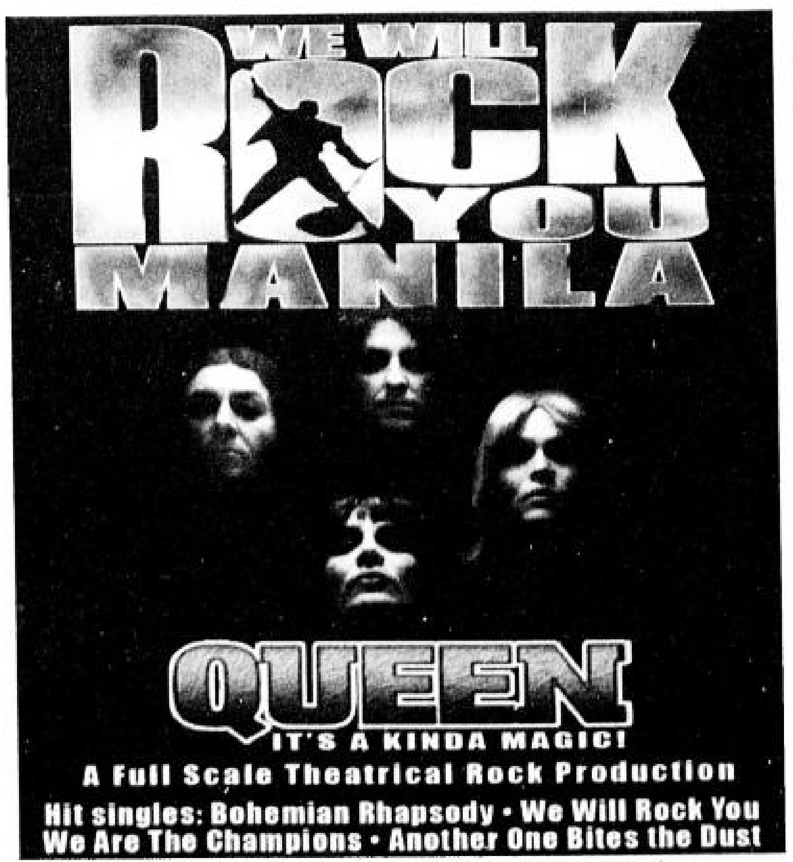
Regal Entertainment produced the entries "Blue Moon," which won Best Picture and Best Screenplay; "Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4?" for which lead star Zsa Zsa Padilla won Best Actress; and "Shake Rattle & Roll 2K5." "Mulawin The Movie" is a co-production of GMA Network Films and Regal. Monteverde's son, Dondon, is a co-producer of "Exodus: Tales from the Enchanted Kingdom."

Monteverde objected when "Kutob" won the Gatpuno Antonio Villegas Cultural Award, saying the movie tackles "nothing but murder and cruelty."

She was peeved that Joel Lamangan did not win Best Director for "Blue Moon." "Exodus" was Second Best Picture; and "Kutob," Third.

A festival execom member told Inquirer Entertainment that "Kutob" won the judges' nod because "the actors were consistent in their characterization."

Generoso Paz, former executive director of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, was chair of the board of jurors. National Artist for Film Eddie Romero was co-chair. The other members were Crispina Belen, Ric Camaligan, Robert Rivera, Marieta Tamondong, Julie Borre and Robert Nacianceno.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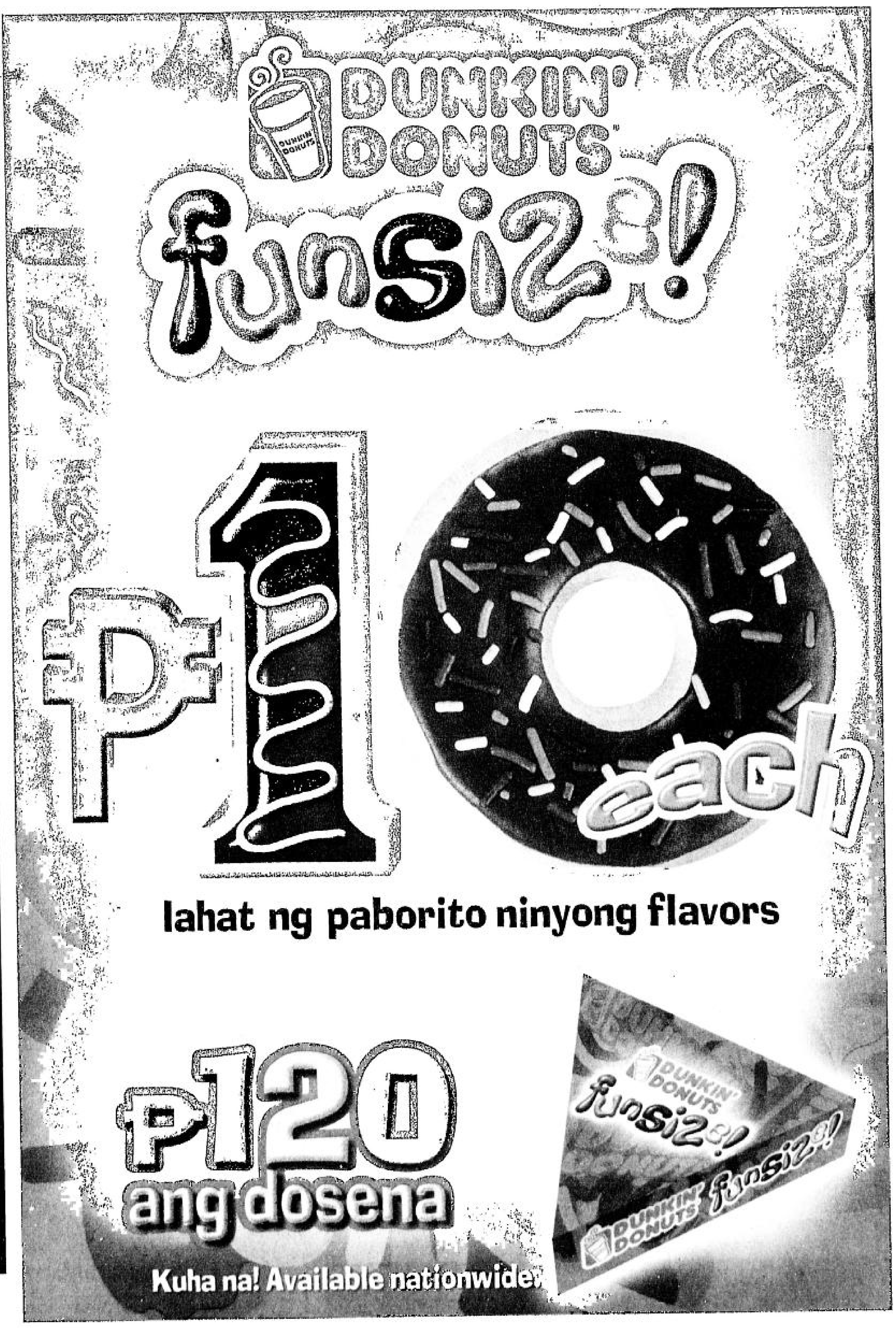
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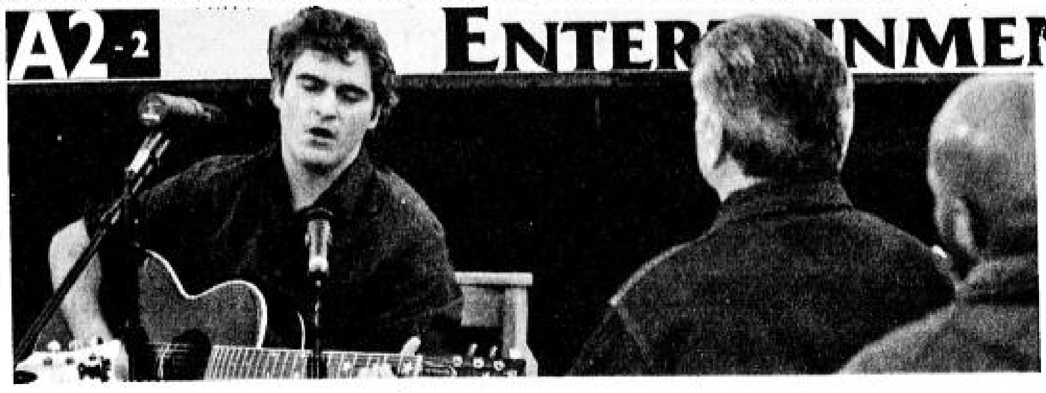

JOAQUIN Phoenix talks with an inmate at Folsom Prison, left, before the screening. Afterwards, above, he performs a song from the movie before a "subdued" audience. AP

Phoenix walks in Cash's shoes

FOLSOM, CALIFORNIA—JOAQUIN PHOENIX, whose portrayal of country singer Johnny Cash in "Walk the Line" has made him an early Oscar front-runner, returned last week to the scene of one of the musician's most famous concerts—Folsom State Prison.

Cash's Jan. 13, 1968, performance in prison yard cemented his image as working-class hero and became a popular live album.

About 54 inmates dressed in denim shirts and pants watched the movie as the actor and his entourage, including musician Shooter Jennings, who played his father, Waylon Jennings, in the movie, and a host of prison officials toured the facility.

Dressed head to toe in Cash's trademark black, Phoenix performed several acoustic songs with Jennings at the prison's Greystone Chapel, including Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues." Jennings played Cash senior's "I'm a Long Way From Home."

Phoenix apologized for his "rusty" performance, saying he had not played since the completion of the movie.

"I don't know if you've noticed but I've messed up like 40 times," Phoenix said.

One inmate asked Phoenix if he learned to play guitar for the movie.

"John wasn't [Jimi] Hendrix," Phoenix replied. "We rehearsed a lot."

Phoenix said his co-star in the film, Reese Witherspoon, who played Cash's wife, June Carter Cash, wanted to be there for the event.

"I know you guys would probably rather see Reese," he said.

Applause

The prisoners were subdued during most of the film, although there was occasional laughter and applause at the end.

"I've always been a fan of Johnny Cash," said inmate Gary Lopez, 61, who has been incarcerated 11 years for attempted murder. "I grew up in the country picking cotton... all we had was a radio. All we listened to was country music. All through the movie I had a lump in my throat."

Warden Matthew Kramer presented Phoenix with a prison-made license plate bearing the actor's name, and gave another to Jennings bearing the movie's title.

The warden asked if Phoenix and 20th Century Fox, the studio which produced the movie, would be willing to make a donation to help fix the aging chapel.

"It would be my pleasure," Phoenix said.

The event was organized by Prison Fellowship, a group that runs Bible studies and other educational programs in prisons.

Fellowship spokesperson Joe Avila said the movie's message would be good for inmates because Cash's "whole life was a message of redemption."

Phoenix has been considered a likely Academy Awards nominee for Best Actor for his role as Cash, who died in 2003 soon after the death of his wife.

Known for brooding roles, Phoenix brilliantly captures the dark corners of Cash, who was haunted by the death of his brother when they were boys and struggled with a long addiction to pills. Yet Phoenix also showed a sunnier side, embodying Cash's joyous nature in both his music and his pursuit of Carter.

Phoenix handled his own singing in "Walk the Line," ably recreating the resonant bass voice of Cash. Phoenix also intensively studied guitar, learning to emulate Cash's freight-train rhythms. *Kim Curtis, AP, with David Germain*

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5 GOLD (SDDS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
6 GOLD (SDDS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
7 GOLD (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 (DOLBY STEREO) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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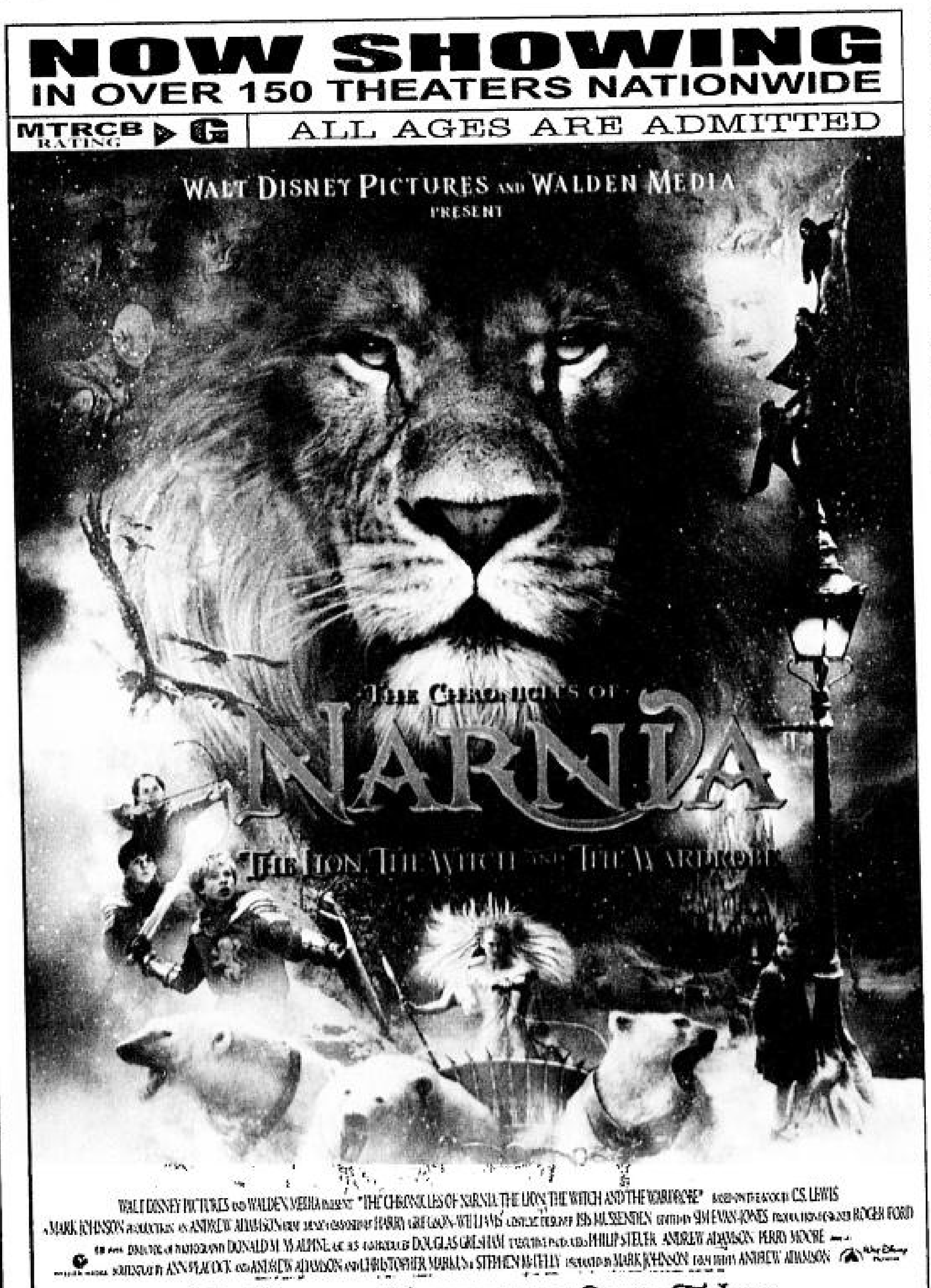

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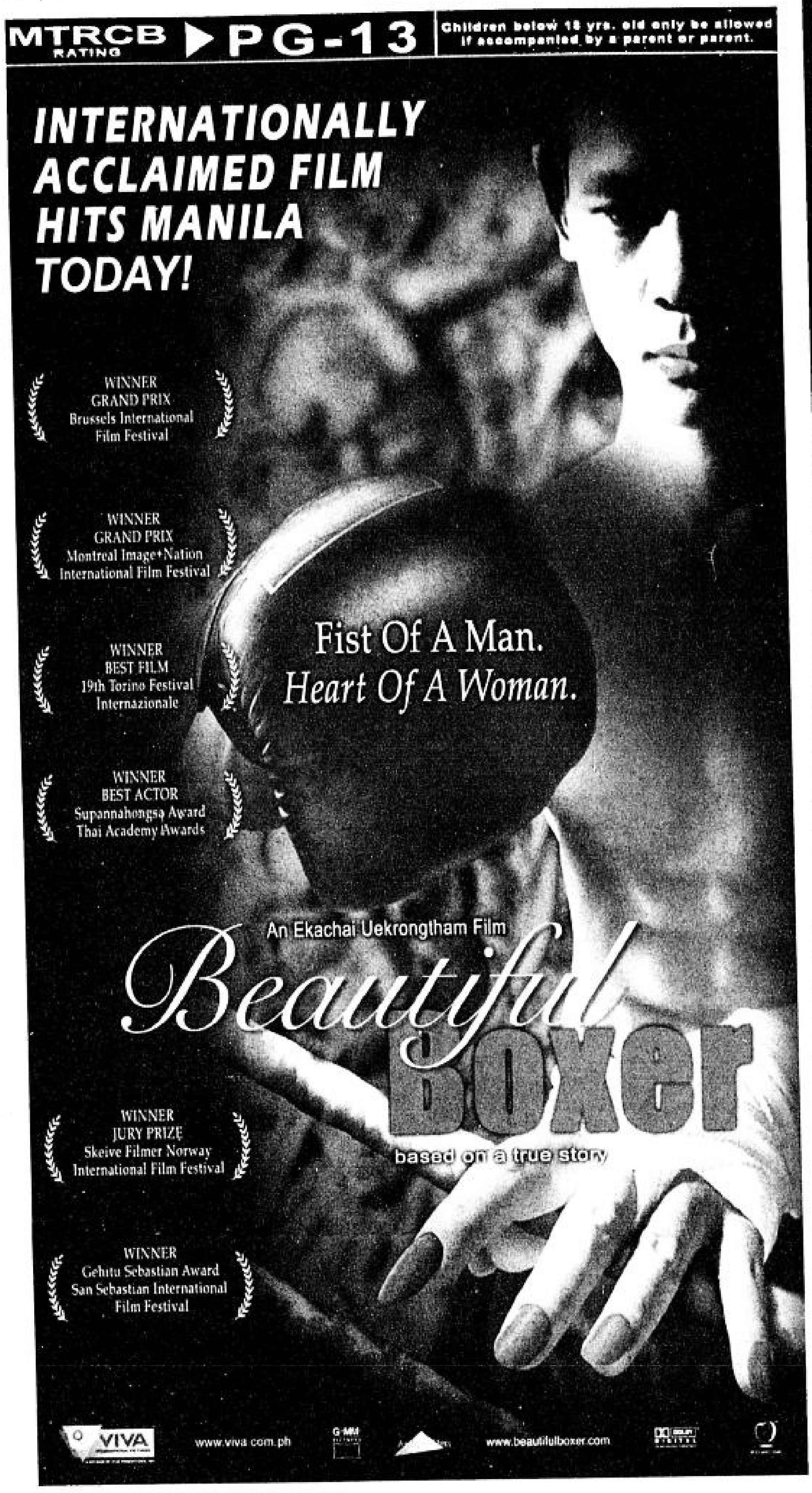
Bracing for life in a wheelchair

HONG KONG—Chinese action star Jet Li said that a lifelong kung fu career has left him with the growing threat of a wheelchair-bound life.

Li, 42, told about 200 Hong Kong students that few knew that he suffered for 20 years after he broke a leg in 1982.

The actor star said doctors warned him that he could end up in a wheelchair. "There's a chance I'd face this problem eventually," he said. "It's not 100 percent, but the rate of it happening is very high." *AP*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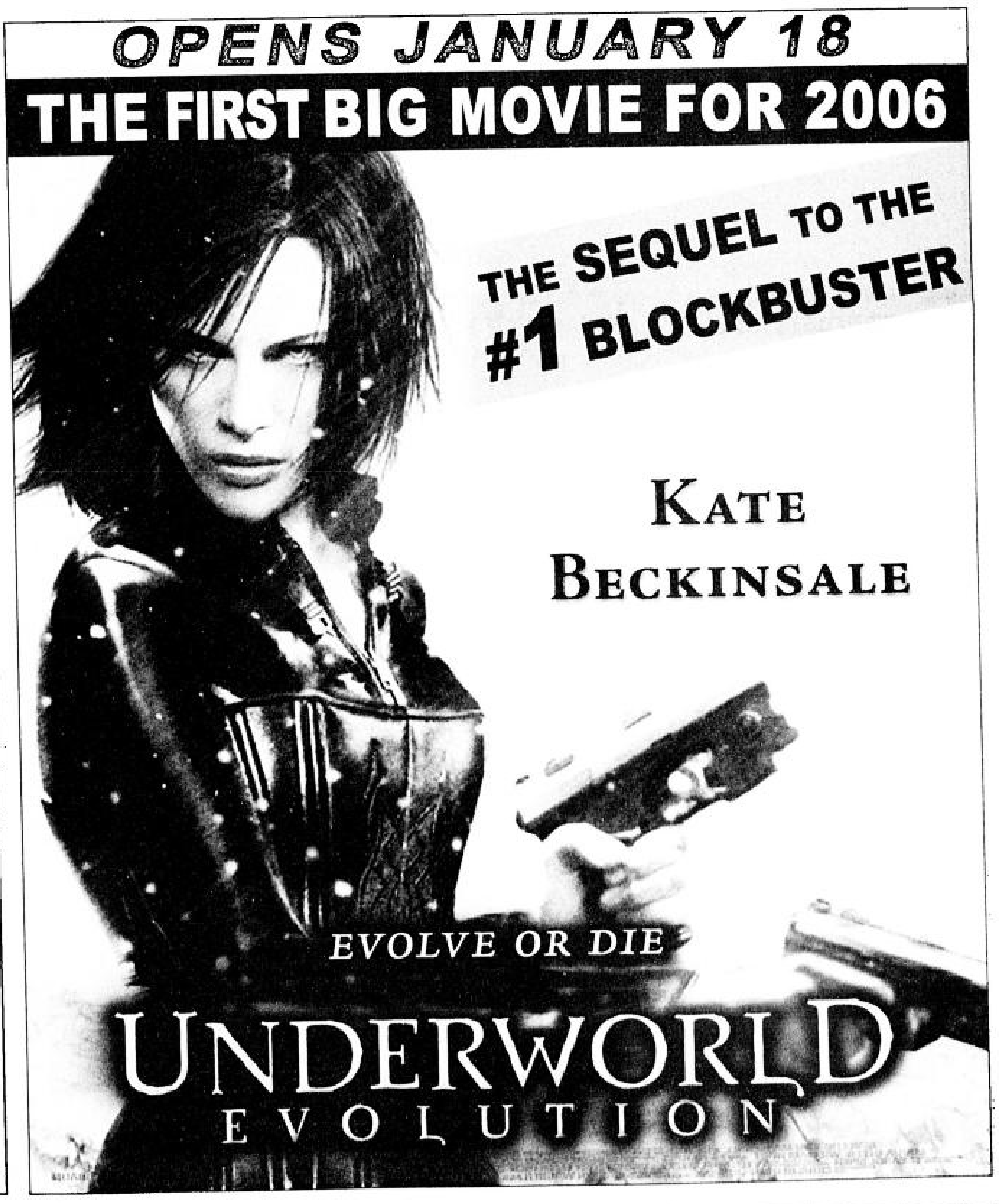
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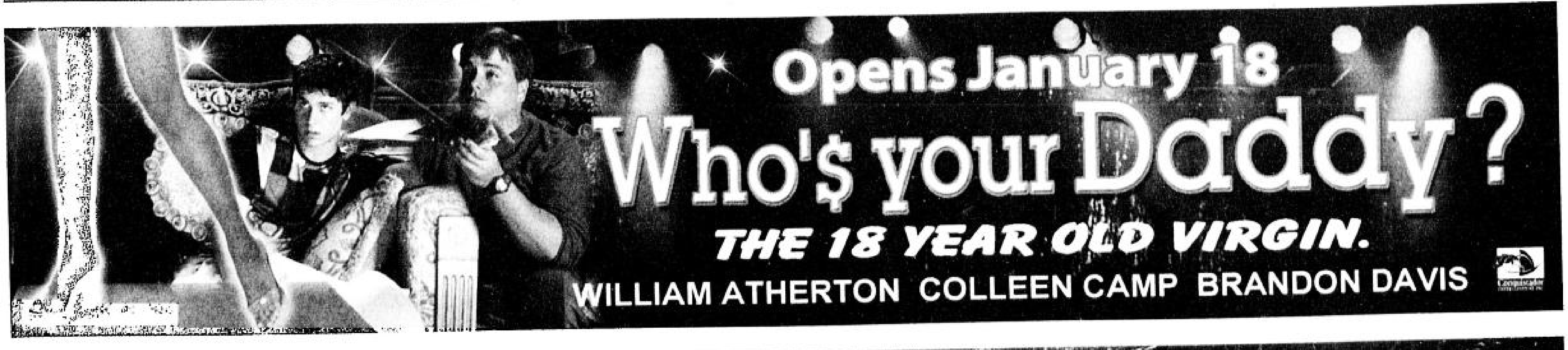
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All eyes on latest Juday-Piolo film

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LOCAL FILM PEOPLE ARE PAYING PARTICULar attention to the box-office showing of the new Juday-Piolo starrer, "Don't Give Up On Us." Not only is it the first Filipino movie opening this year, after the 2005 Metro Filmfest; it's also **Judy Ann Santos** and **Piolo Pascual**'s first movie that doesn't build them up as a real-life romantic tandem.

That's because Juday is currently the girlfriend of **Ryan Agoncillo**, and there's even talk about their getting married.

This could be a problem with some local movie fans, who appear to prefer a combination of reel and real romance, so they can more completely groove to a romantic film.

Fact is, all of the screen tandem's previous starrers—"Kahit Isang Saglit," "Bakit Di Pa Totohanin," and "Till There Was You"—more than hinted at a real-life romance between the two young stars.

In many TV interviews, they were compelled to boost their movies' "*kilig* factor" by whispering sweet nothings in each other's ears, blushing as they stole glances at each other, cuddled and nuzzled, etc.

The observant viewer noted that, after the movie they were promoting had been screened, their excitement over each other quickly ebbed. But some other fans believed the "passionate" promotional gambit, and patronized their movies with empathetic alacrity.

What about their current starrer, will it also click without the ersatz sweetness? If it does, it could be a sign that local viewers are growing up, and can already tell the difference between film fantasy and reality.

A lot will also depend on the movie itself, if it connects with viewers on its own terms to do that, director **Joyce Bernal** has whipped up a tale that casts Judy Ann as a domineering woman and Piolo as a musician with simple tastes.

They're so different from each other that they initially get on each other's nerves. But, of course, love has a way of soothing all ruffled feelings, so it's a fair bet that, at film's end, the two contentious lovers don't give up on each other.

Feedback

FROM **Jose Mari C. Maycacayan**: "I would like to commend some TV shows and personalities for their craftsmanship, dedication, technical proficiency and concern for their target audience.

"TV shows: 'Pipol,' 'It's My Life,' 'Sports Unlimited,' 'F,' 'The Correspondents,' 'Private Conversations with Boy Abunda,' 'RX Men,' 'At Your Service Star Power,' 'Love to Love,' 'Para Po,' 'Y Speak Live,' 'Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako,' 'Pinoy Pop Superstar.'

"Viewers and advertisers should support these programs. Hard work should be rewarded!

"TV personalities: **Cito Beltran, Jessica Soho, Johnny Delgado, Maricel Soriano, Paolo Bediones, Vicky Morales.**

"There should be sharing of knowledge and expertise in the industry. Proper guidance is needed in comedy shows. And we will all benefit from continuous research, discussion and study.

"You are much needed by the industry. Despite everything, you are still optimistic about the future—I agree with you!"

'Breakaway'

FIRST "American Idol" champ **Kelly Clarkson** caps her banner year with the release of a repackaged version of "Breakaway," her phenomenal (quadruple platinum) disc that topped the Billboard charts and launched four hit singles.

Clarkson took a big risk with "Breakaway," because it transformed her from pop diva to rocker chick. But the gamble has paid off in a major way because it's won the nod of younger music buffs and set records in terms of album sales and scanned digital tracks.

The singer starts 2006 with Grammy nominations for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance and Best Pop Vocal Album.

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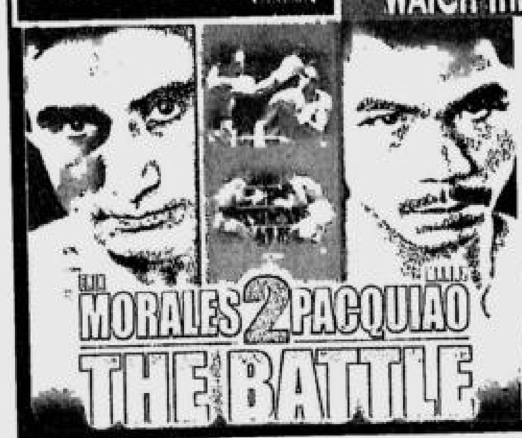

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2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 12:00FS/12:25MF/03:20/06:15 08:30LFS/09:10LMF/11:30END
MEGAMALL
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 10:30FS/10:55MF/01:50/04:55 07:10LFS/07:40LMF/10:05END

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1 KING KONG 10:50FS/11:00MF/02:30/06:00 09:10LFS/09:30LMF/12:35END
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 11:00FS/11:30MF/01:45/04:20/06:55 09:15LFS/09:30LMF/11:50END
3 BLUE MOON 11:20FS/11:30MF/01:30/03:30/05:30/09:30 09:15LFS/09:30LMF/11:15END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
5 FAMILY STONE
6 KING KONG
7 ST. ANGE
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11 EXODUS
12 BLUE MOON

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
7 FAMILY STONE
8 EXODUS
9 BLUE MOON
10 ST. ANGE

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 BLUE MOON
2 ST. ANGE
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 KING KONG
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
8 EXODUS
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 FAMILY STONE
11 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
5 EXODUS
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
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1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
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5 BLUE MOON
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 ST. ANGE
8 KING KONG

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1 KING KONG
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3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
4 EXODUS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 FAMILY STONE
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 BLUE MOON
12 ST. ANGE

SM SAN LAZARO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 BLUE MOON
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM MOLINO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BACOOR
1 ST. ANGE
2 FAMILY STONE
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 KING KONG
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
8 EXODUS

SM CITY MARILAO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 EXODUS
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY LUCENA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 EXODUS

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
6 EXODUS
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 EXODUS
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 BLUE MOON

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1 KINGKONG 12:30, 4:05, 7:45, 11:10 GP
2 CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30 GP
3 CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 11:00, 2:10, 5:10, 8:10, 11:00 GP
4 FAMILY STONE 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

FAMILY STONE PG13 12:30,2:55,5:20, 7:45,10:10	CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP 2:00,5:00,8:00	CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP 12:00,3:00,6:00,9:00
DON'T GIVE UP ON US PG13 12:20,2:45,5:10, 7:35,10:00	KING KONG PG13 2:40,6:20,10:00	CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP 1:10,4:10,7:10,10:10

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② CHRONICLES OF NARNIA MTRCB. GP 1:50, 4.40, 7.30, 10.20 LMF
③ FAMILY STONE MTRCB PG-13 12.00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
④ KING KONG MTRCB. PG-13 11 00, 2.40, 6 20, 10:00 LMF
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CINEMA 2 KING KONG PG13 11:00, 2:40, 6:20, 10:00
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CINEMA 3 FAMILY STONE PG13 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
CINEMA 4 NARNIA GP 11:15, 2:10, 5:05, 8:00, 10:50
CINEMA 5 NARNIA GP 10:30, 1:20, 4:15, 7:10, 10:05
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KING KONG 12:00/2:20/3:40/6:00/7:20/9:40	DON'T GIVE UP ON US 12:20/2:40/5:00/7:20/9:40	BLUE MOON 12:30/2:40/5:00/7:20/9:40	GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
AKO, LEGAL WIFE 1:40/4:20/7:00/9:40	FAMILY STONE 12:20/2:40/5:00/7:20/9:40	NARNIA 11:50/1:10/2:40/4:00 5:30/6:50/8:20/9:40	NARNIA 12:30/3:20/6:10/9:00
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX	ST. ANGE 2:00/4:20/6:40/9:00		ONLY P12[illegible] ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P[illegible]

ALIMALL CINEMAS

1	DON'T GIVE UP ON US 1:30/3:50/6:10/8:30	2	NARNIA 12:00/2:40/5:20/8:00	3	KING KONG 1:10/4:50/8:30
4	ST. ANGE 12:50/3:10/5:30/7:50	5	EXODUS 12:00/2:00/4:00/6:00/8:00		DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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GALLERIA
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1 The Chronicles of NARNIA • THX
1:00 3:50 6:40 9:30

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00

3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00

4 THE FAMILY STONE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

6 KING KONG
11:30 3:00 6:30 10:00

7 EXODUS
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:15 2:45 5:15 7:45 10:00

9 SAINT. ANGE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

10 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:20 2:45
BLUE MOON 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA
536-7809 to 12

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA 11:30 2:05 4:40 7:15 9:50

2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:00 2:00 4:00
BLUE MOON 6:15 8:05 10:00

3 THE FAMILY STONE
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2 12:30 2:50 4:35
EXODUS 5:30 7:40 9:50

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 9:50

7 SAINT. ANGE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST
682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:15

4 KING KONG
1:35 5:10 9:00

5 SAINT. ANGE
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 BLUE MOON
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

7 The Chronicles of NARNIA
11:00 2:00 5:00 8:00

8 THE FAMILY STONE
1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00

NOVALICHES
935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 BLUE MOON
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 EXODUS
5 KING KONG
6 The Chronicles of NARNIA
7 THE FAMILY STONE
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

CITISQUARE MALABON
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1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

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1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 SAINT ANGE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 THE FAMILY STONE

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Cinema 1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
Cinema 2 BLUE MOON
Cinema 3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
Cinema 4 EXODUS
Cinema 5 KING KONG
Cinema 6 The Chronicles of NARNIA
Cinema 7 THE FAMILY STONE
Cinema 8 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

STA. ROSA
(049) 837-0907

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
4 KING KONG
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LIPA
(043) 757-3664
(043) 312-5870

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA

DASMARIÑAS
(046) 852-2125
(046) 416-4332

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN the MOVIE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA

ANGELES
(045) 892-2348

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

IMUS
(046) 875-3838
(046) 471-8188

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 KING KONG
3 SAINT ANGE
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 THE FAMILY STONE

STARMILLS
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(045) 961-5270

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 BLUE MOON
4 KING KONG
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA
6 The Chronicles of NARNIA

BACOLOD
(034) 441-0453
(034) 441-0459

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 KING KONG
6 EXODUS

ILOILO
(033) 336-8070

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

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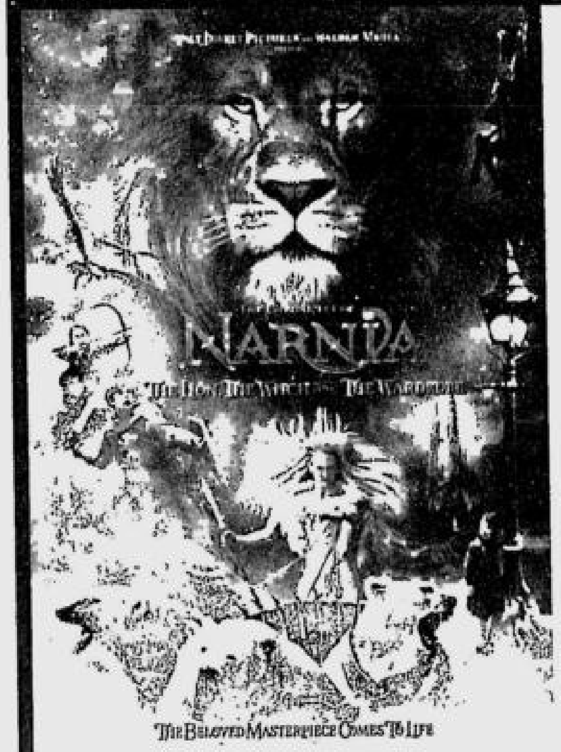
Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	4 ST. ANGE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 FAMILY STONE	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 KING KONG	5 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	7 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KING KONG GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FAMILY STONE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA		
	3 FAMILY STONE	4 KING KONG	5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	4 KING KONG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Simply present two (2) Narnia Movie Tickets at the Glorietta 4 Activity Center Narnia Event on January 7 & 8 and get free Face Painting, Narnia Picture Taking, and a chance to win exciting prizes at the Snow Ball Dive!

MTRCB Rating: General Audience (G)

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⑤ MULAWIN

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PAL to stop flights to Riyadh, Kuala Lumpur

Eyes more frequencies to US, revival of India route

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES WILL STOP SERVING LESS PROFITABLE routes like Riyadh and Kuala Lumpur within the first quarter so it can increase its flights to the United States and revive major destinations like India, its top official said.

PAL president Jaime Bautista said that Riyadh has not been profitable for the past several years and that by March, the flag carrier would stop serving its last Middle East route and use the big aircraft to open more flights to the United States.

PAL flies three times a week to Riyadh and thrice a week to the Malaysian capital. Volume to Kuala Lumpur, according to sources, was affected by the entry of Malaysia's low-cost carrier flying to and from Clark in Pampanga.

PAL will suspend operations to Kuala Lumpur starting Feb. 15 and to Riyadh starting March 2.

Bautista said they had to review domestic and overseas operations as newer Airbus planes arrive. PAL recently signed the purchase order on nine narrow-bodied Airbus planes and a lease on four more aircraft. It also has an option to buy an additional five airplanes.

The flag carrier said it may also modernize its wide-bodied fleet to expand its long-haul trips.

"We were trying to maintain Riyadh to give our OFWs the seats but since the Middle Eastern carriers have been serving the route well, then we can suspend

PAL/ B4

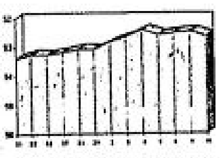
INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱52.645 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 10, 2006



¥114.48 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 10, 2006

GOLD:
$543.50-544.00
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 9, 2006

Vehicle sales up 10.3% in 2005

By Ronnel W. Domingo

VEHICLE SALES grew 10.3 percent in 2005 mainly due to the advance purchases by consumers in anticipation of a price increase this year resulting from the higher value-added tax, according to an industry report.

Local assemblers sold a total of 97,063 units compared to 88,003 units sold in 2004.

The 2005 sales figure was higher than the forecast 95,000 units or the target growth of 7.95 percent.

Last year's sales performance was a significant recovery as the local market contracted the previous year, with turnover declining by 4.6 percent due to the sluggish demand for commercial vehicles in the aftermath of increased prices under the new excise tax scheme.

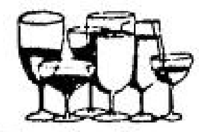
In a joint report, the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA) said sales also benefited from the aggressive promotion and advertising campaigns to sustain sales through the year.

"Although sales grew, competition remains stiff and margins slim," Campi and TMA said.

The groups said overall sales were projected to increase slightly in January due to fleet accounts deliveries and a pos-

VEHICLE/ B4

WHAT'S INSIDE



Equitable under-currents /B3

Yield of 10-year treasury bonds drops below 10% /B4

RP exports down by 1.6% in Nov. 2005 /B12

XC70 OOOHH'S & AAHH'S

Driving a great vehicle creates diversified notion and emotion – depending on the driver and vehicle he drives. Below are reviews from illustrious car critiques and writers who took the Volvo XC70 for a test drive. Though compositions and wordings bear differences, you'll find out that their reviews share a common context – they've been pleasantly surprised and impressed after experiencing the Volvo XC70.

"The Cross Country does track speeds off the beaten track – in estate comfort. Take the XC70 onto softer ground, and Volvo's roster of electronic helping hands come into play. Floor it, and the AWD system can direct up to 65 percent of the drive torque to the rear tires. And if that doesn't help, the TRACS anti-spin system steps in to apply any of the 4-wheel disc brakes to the spinning wheels."

KENNETH QUINTAL
PUBLISHER, EDITOR-AT-LARGE
C! MAGAZINE

"The accommodations are first-rate with ample everything for five or even six people. The interior is very driver-oriented with every control within easy reach. The switches are well-damped and solid–worth every penny you'll spend on this car or crossover wagon or whatever you'd like to call it. The controls are easy to use and decipher, albeit a bit of a button fest."

ULYSSES ANG
MOTORING JOURNALIST, MOTIONCARS.COM
MANILA TIMES CONTRIBUTOR

"As this big Swede will haul five big passengers and as much cargo as can fit in the commodious rear cargo area with relative ease thanks to the sheer grunt from its 210 bhp 2.5-liter 5-cylinder 20-valve engine, it's go-anywhere all-wheel-drive system and its high ground clearance. Torque from the Light Pressure Turbo (LPT) engine is a generous 236-lbs-ft, available from as low as 1800 rpm. The result of having so much twisting force at such a low engine speed is instant forward squirt from a mere tap on the accelerator. Acceleration is further abetted by the XC70's 5-speed automatic transmission's Geartronic™ system that allows manual up and downshifts."

MANNY DELOS REYES
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
SPEED MAGAZINE
CONTRIBUTOR, THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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If the sight of it had already overwhelmed you, there's still more to experience from within. The well thought-out and luxurious interior accommodates your every inclination for comfort and style. But if there's one thing to be known about the Volvo XC70, it's the fact that the XC70 is at its best when you put it in motion. Feel an off-the-ground kind of rush as the turbocharged engine moves you with seamless power and acceleration through any and all kinds of terrain. Sedan-like driving with superior road-handling – the XC70 truly sets the paradigm that you wouldn't think possible.

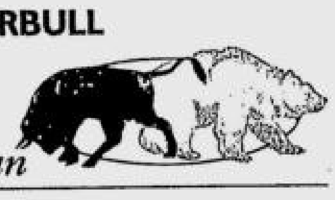
Volvo featured is the XC70 - 2.5 Liter, 210 bhp Engine, 5-Speed Geartronic™, Electronically Controlled All-Wheel Drive, Audio and Cruise Control in Steering Wheel, High-Performance Sound System, 10-Disc CD Changer, Integrated GSM Phone, 16" Alloy Wheels.

Let the surprises take you from urban highways to rural off-road terrains to just about anywhere you want with utmost comfort. Get behind the wheel of the 2006 Volvo XC70. Test drive a Volvo now.

Photo may vary from actual unit available at dealership.

Bearbull's birthday bash

MR. BEARBULL



Ron Nathan

LAST FRIDAY, I WAS 76 AND WE DECIDED to have a blow out. Unfortunately, it was in my front tire. We went to a beautiful Chinese restaurant, but the lights were too bright so I asked the waiter to dim some.

The manager was a chow mein fellow and suggested the specialty of the house. Unfortunately, she was on vacation so we ordered tiger prawns with sweet and sour sauce. They were enormous but when I stuck my fork in one, it made a loud noise and flew out of the window.

In the interests of economy, we were given one chopstick each. We each received fortune cookies. They read:

Wife who puts husband in doghouse soon finds him in cathouse.

Man who fights with wife all day gets no piece at night.

Man who stands on toilet is high on pot.

Protons have mass. I didn't even know they were catholic.

We had to get permission from the mayor and the fire brigade before lighting 76 candles. The heat was so intense that an American satellite issued a global warming alert and my toenails turned black.

* * *

LOOKING back, 2005 was a mixed year. On the positive side, the EVAT was passed but too late in the year to have much impact. Still, the budget deficit fell by about P50 billion from its record P211 billion.

Assuming that the VAT will be increased across the board from 10 percent to 12 percent on February 1st, the deficit should fall substantially in 2006 and beyond.

On this assumption, interest rates have fallen to a 19-year low and the 91-day Treasury bill has dropped from 7.87 percent a year ago to 4.96 percent. The peso has been the strongest currency in the galaxy, appreciating from 56.18 to 52.25 early this week.

This is good for the country as oil prices have come down, and inflation reduced from 8 percent to 6.6 percent. It is also good for property companies and banks, together with companies with large debt, both foreign and peso denominated. AC and TEL come to mind.

It is not so good for families cashing their dollar remittances as they have lost almost 7 percent since the peso topped out. It is also not helpful to call centers that get paid primarily in dollars.

* * *

GDP will have risen by about 4.9 percent, well below the previous year's 6.4 percent and also below the government's target. This is partly due to the BIR under-collecting by P15 billion, but mainly to poor export growth, falling from 10 percent in 2004 to 3.4 percent in 2005. We have little manufacturing in this country and Matsushita has just closed its factory and laid off 1,000 workers.

Carrier Engineering has threatened to relocate to China if there is another across-the-board wage increase. We export some garments, mostly children's clothes, and some fruit, but two-thirds of our exports are in electronics.

All we do is to make some computer chips and reassemble motherboards for re-export. We are not into LCD and plasma TVs, nor do we produce I-Pods - this is where the action is.

Fortunately, our trade deficit of $7 billion was covered by remittances of $10 billion, but that does not detract from the fact that continuous trade deficits weaken the economy and eventually the currency.

Call centers provide 100,000 jobs, but little investment; so our main hope lies in the mining industry, which the government hopes will increase from 1.5 percent of GDP to 10 percent by 2010.

* * *

PHILEX GOLD has signed a joint venture agreement with FEC Resources and this could bring as much as $11 million for development and construction of a mine in Surigao. Atlas Mining will be launching an IPO after First Gen.

Everyone is waiting anxiously for the IPO price of First Gen. And this should be known by January 26th. Obviously, natural gas is a much-sought after commodity, the price of which rose 46 percent in the US last year. The road show is underway, and a good response is anticipated, but I hope that the book builders do not decide to overprice it. We have seen SM, MWC and SCC all go to discounts so IPOs are not always the way to a fortune.

I am guessing that they will narrow the range from P51 - P74 to a closer quote, say P60 - P65. At that price, I would probably apply for it, but if the price were higher, say P70, I would let it go.

At P74, there are additional shares to be sold so that should be an immediate resistance level. I will make further comments once the range has been fixed. Whatever the price, the sale will give FPH a large one-time gain, and the stock has been a top performer over the past year.

* * *

The US added 105,000 jobs in December, well below the 200,000 expected, but the previous month was revised from 205,000 to 300,000 and the economy appears to be in good shape.

The FEDERAL RESERVE will probably increase rates to 4.5 percent and may well stop there, as they do not want to precipitate a property slump which in turn could cause an sell-off in equities.

The dollar is likely to resume its downtrend, as it is difficult to see how the US can support a budget deficit, a huge trade deficit and the war in Iraq.

For this reason, Fund Managers have been moving funds into Asia and the Morgan Stanley Asia-Pacific index has hit a 10-year high. Foreign brokers have returned to our fledgling market and pushed it to a point where the risk factor is high but the path of least resistance appears upwards.

To some extent, this is a spillover effect. The PHISIX is still nearly 40 percent below its 1997 high despite several improvements to the index.

Commodities, too, have been booming, gold is now at a 25-year high and copper at an all time high, so PHILEX should have an excellent year as it mines both metals.

Since I recommended it a couple of months ago, it has risen non-stop, straight past my resistance level of P1.80, but this is justified as gold is currently at $533 an ounce. Most other commodities are at their peak but they will be vulnerable if growth in China and the US slows down later in the year.

As expected, BDO has bid for EPCI through a share swap worth P56.80. This is slightly below the market price but EPCI is selling at a Price/Earnings ratio of 19, which is well above MBT at 13 and BPI at 15 so the offer is a fair one. GSIS has turned it down but SSS with a 26 percent stake is considering it.

If it accepts, BDO will have won control. The offer is valid until Jan 31. In the meantime, wait and SY.

All messages with attachments should be sent to mrbearbull2010@yahoo.com and not to the address below. mrbearbull@hotmail.com

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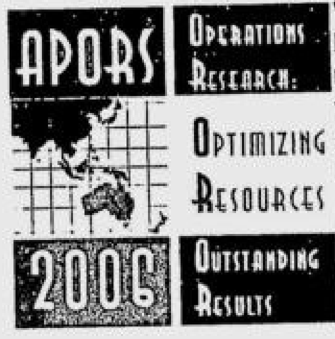
The organization of **Asia-Pacific Operational Research Societies (APORS)**, led by member society **Operations Research Society of the Philippines (ORSP)**, proudly announces

The 7th Asia-Pacific Conference in Operations Research

January 15-18, 2006 at The Dusit Hotel Nikko, Makati, Metro Manila



With the theme **Operations Research: Optimizing Resources for Outstanding Results**, the conference brings together OR practitioners, researchers, and academicians whose collective work has sustained OR's continuing contribution to decision-making. Specifically:

- **Researchers** will present their findings dealing with the theoretical, computational, and application aspects of OR
- **Practitioners** will share experiences on methodologies, problems, and outcomes of applying OR to solve real problems
- **OR workers** will discuss pertinent academic-, theoretical- and application-oriented issues
- **Decision-makers** will gain insights from experiences of others who have benefited from the use of OR in the public and private sectors

Conference Program

Monday, Jan 16		
7:30 - 8:45	Registration	
8:45 - 9:45	Papers: Financial Applications I	IFORS Scholars Track I
10:00 - 10:45	Opening Ceremonies Keynote Speaker: Her Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	
10:45 - 11:30	Plenary Talk: Optimization Here, There and Everywhere by Thomas L. Magnanti, IFORS President and Dean of Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA	
11:30 - 12:30	IFORS Distinguished Lecture: Generalised Colorings and Chromatic Scheduling by Dominique de Werra, Professor, Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland	
13:30 - 14:30	Panel Discussion: OR for Outstanding Results in Business ▸ Robert Bateman, American University of Sharjah, UAE ▸ Michael Becker, Zuellig Philippines Inc ▸ Sung Joo Park, Korea Advanced Inst of Science and Technology	
14:30 - 15:30	Tutorial: Pro Model	Papers: Financial Applications II
15:45 - 16:45	Invited Session: The Multi-disciplinarity of OR by Heiner Muller-Merbach, Germany	Papers: Game Theory & Simulation
16:45 - 17:45	Invited Session: OR for Outstanding Results in Business by Sim Cheng Hwee, Integrated Decision Systems, Singapore	IFORS Scholars Track II
Tuesday, Jan 17		
8:30 - 9:30	Papers: Production Planning and Inventory Control	IFORS Scholars Track III
9:30 - 10:15	Plenary Session: Revenue Management by Peter Bell, Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario, Canada	
10:30 - 12:30	Panel Discussion: OR for Outstanding Results in Governance ▸ Han Chun Kwong, Malaysia ▸ Fortunato de la Pena, Philippines ▸ Robert Bateman, U.A.E. ▸ Tatsuo Oyama, Japan ▸ Elise del Rosario, Philippines	
13:30 - 14:30	Invited Session: Wisdom from Real Life Experiences by N. Ravichandran, Indian Institute of Management, India	Papers: Facilities Management and Logistics
14:30 - 15:30		Papers: DEA & Queuing
15:45 - 16:45	ILOG Tutorial	Papers: E-Commerce and Information Systems
16:45 - 17:45		Papers: Software Reliability
Wednesday Jan 18		
8:30 - 9:30	Papers: Heuristic and Optimization Techniques	IFORS Scholars Track IV
9:30 - 10:15	Plenary Session: Holistic conceptual models of the enterprise: Alternative orientation for OR/MS education and practice by Heiner Muller Merbach, University of Kaiserslautern, Germany	
10:30 - 11:30	Papers: Supply Chain Management	Papers: Presentations OR in Business
11:30 - 12:30	Tutorial: Using Excel Solver to Tackle OR Problems by Ralph Ante, Professor, Ateneo Graduate School of Business	Papers: Global Knowledge Economy
13:30 - 14:30	Papers: Neural Networks	IFORS Scholars Track V
14:30 - 15:30	Papers: National Contributions	
15:45 - 17:45	Closing Program ▸ Strategic OR by Peter Bell ▸ Secretary Virgilio Pena, Chairman, Commission on Information and Communications Technology ▸ Presentation of Young Scholars ▸ Presentation of Best Applied and Theoretical Paper Awards	
19:00 - 23:00	Closing Banquet	

Profiling Some of the Conference Speakers

Dr. Heiner Muller-Merbach, Professor for Business Information Systems and Operations Research, University of Kaiserslautern, Germany. Formerly with University of Mainz and Institute of Technology in Darmstadt. President of the International Federation of Operational Research Societies (IFORS) in 1983-85. Co-chairman of Technology Advisory Council for Rhineland-Palatinate. Author of 12 books and more than 400 journal articles.

Peter Bell, Professor, Management Science, Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario. Awarded the 2005 INFORMS prize for teaching the practice of operations research and management science. 1995-97 IFORS President. 2001-2005 Vice President, International Activities, of the Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS). Judge of Edelman and Wagner prize competitions. Author of some 50 journal articles, 15 books and more than 100 cases.

Thomas L. Magnanti, Dean of the School of Engineering at MIT. Current IFORS President. Founding co-director of industry-university collaborative research and educational program at MIT. Former head of the Management Science Area of the Sloan School of Management. Past President of the Operations Research Society of America (ORSA) and Institute of Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS). Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Operations Research*.

Dr. Dominique de Werra. Provost, vice-president and education director of E.P.F.L. (since 1990). President of the Swiss O.R. Society in 1985-1986. President of EURO (European Association of Operational Research Societies) from 1987-1988. Associate Editor of Discrete Applied Mathematics (USA), Annals of O.R. (USA), EJOR (Europe), RAIRO (France), Ricerca Operative (Italy), and Asia-Pacific Journal of OR. Author-editor of six books. Organized conferences in Switzerland and France.

Registration Fees (inclusive of materials, meals, welcome reception, closing and banquet): P12,500 for non-ORSP members
Call ORSP at 439-9496 or e-mail us at secretariat@orsp.org.ph

Hosted by ORSP Operations Research Society of the Philippines
Technical program by Management Sciences
Supported by IFORS

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 10, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	25,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	38	36	37	967,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56	56.5	56	56.5	517,600
China Banking Corp.	605	605	605	605	2,560
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	62	63	62	62.5	2,635,700
International Exch. Bank	20.25	20.5	20.25	20.5	137,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33.5	34	33	33.5	505,400
Philippine National Bank	32.5	32.5	32	32	159,600
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	11,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	12,000
Security Bank Corp.	35.5	35.5	35	35.5	250,700
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	31.5	31	31.5	3,800
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTION					
Manulife Financial Corp.	3150	3150	3150	3150	50
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2110	2110	2110	2110	380
Ivantage Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	350,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	53.5	53.5	52.5	52.5	808,900
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	14.75	14.5	14.5	83,000
Manila Electric Co. B	22.25	22.25	22	22	236,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	3,994,000
Petron Corp.	4.85	4.95	4.85	4.95	7,749,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.18	0.2	0.18	0.2	510,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.97	0.97	0.96	0.96	340,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	6,000
CADP Group Corp.	1	1	1	1	30,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	3,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	40	40	39.5	39.5	226,000
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	11,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	7,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	63.5	64.5	234,800
San Miguel Corp. B	89	89	88	88.5	52,600
Universal Robina Corp.	20	20.25	20	20	33,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	300,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	1,570,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.78	0.79	0.78	0.78	1,910,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	50,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.45	1,852,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	2,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.79	0.8	0.79	0.8	100,000
CHEMICALS					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	12,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	30,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,000,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	7	7	7	7	123,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	21,000,000
Ayala Corp.	342.5	347.5	340	340	323,870
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.46	370,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.95	4.9	4.9	769,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	2,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	2,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.1	2.14	2.1	2.14	1,401,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	270,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	17,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	25,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.18	1.2	11,166,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.45	3.3	3.4	5,563,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.22	356,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.65	3.8	3.65	3.75	2,832,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.21	0.25	0.21	0.25	40,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	5,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.215	0.2	0.21	6,280,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	15,000
SM Investments Corp.	242	245	242	243	525,910
South China Resources Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	30,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	200,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	100,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.5	3,410,300
Belle Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	3,897,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.99	120,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	54,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2	2.04	1.98	1.98	268,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	1,200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	6,920,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.027	6,500,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	10,422,000
Interport Res.	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	10,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	1,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1,520,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	1,040,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.36	1.4	1.36	1.4	6,164,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.36	15,420,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	700,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	3,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.42	1.44	275,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8	8.1	7.9	8	6,900,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.125	0.13	2,210,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	20,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.94	0.95	0.93	0.94	3,720,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	770	775	770	770	56,200
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.55	3.6	677,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1850	1850	1840	1845	73,020
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.175	700,000
Ionics Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	80,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	20,000
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.015	19,800,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	10	10.25	10	10.25	1,637,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.22	1.22	176,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Grand Plaza Hotel Corp.	26	26	26	26	318,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	423,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	120,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	700,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.05	1,758,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2,000
Paxys Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.2	6.2	877,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.08	1.12	1.08	1.12	1,907,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.08	1.18	1.08	1.18	2,733,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.007	173,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.9	6	5.8	5.8	410,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.3	496,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.54	1.62	1.54	1.58	447,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.235	0.235	0.225	0.23	10,700,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	27,210,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	70,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.03	0.029	0.029	91,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	18,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.4	1.46	1.4	1.44	5,649,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.96	2.02	1.96	2.02	19,329,000
Samirara Mining Corp.	27.5	28	27.5	28	76,100
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.28	0.29	0.27	0.28	830,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	200,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.185	0.185	320,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	4,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	400,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	230,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.8	791,000
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	13	13.5	12.75	13	293,700

DISCLOSURES

AS OF DEC. 31, 2005, 2,116 common shares under **Globe Telecom, Inc.'s** ESOP have been fully exercised and paid for. These were listed yesterday, increasing the number of common shares listed under ESOP to 116,551. There are 1.08 million common shares currently under the Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

***

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. reported a lost stock certificate for the month of December 2005. Certificate number 912 was listed under Ellen Dy, with 10,000 shares.

Compiled by Cyril L. Bonabente, PDI Research

CURRENCIES

January 10, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.827198	1.000000	52.4210
Japan	Yen	0.007236	0.008748	0.4586
United Kingdom	Pound	1.460501	1.765600	92.5545
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106723	0.129017	6.7632
Switzerland	Franc	0.648528	0.784006	41.0984
Canada	Dollar	0.708279	0.856238	44.8849
Singapore	Dollar	0.506149	0.611883	32.0755
Australia	Dollar	0.621206	0.750976	39.3669
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.194684	2.653153	139.0809
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220574	0.266652	13.9782
Brunei	Dollar	0.504604	0.610016	31.9776
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000088	0.000106	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.020816	0.025164	1.3191
UAE	Dirham	0.225216	0.272264	14.2724
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.208900	63.3717
Argentina	Peso	0.269885	0.326264	17.1031
Brazil	Real	0.365370	0.441696	23.1541
Denmark	Kroner	0.134079	0.162088	8.4968
India	Rupee	0.018710	0.022619	1.1857
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220674	0.266773	13.9845
Mexico	New Peso	0.078193	0.094527	4.9552
New Zealand	Dollar	0.571190	0.690512	36.1973
Norway	Kroner	0.125628	0.151872	7.9613
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013832	0.016722	0.8766
South Africa	Rand	0.136333	0.164813	8.6397
Korea	Won	0.000846	0.001023	0.0536
Sweden	Kroner	0.107068	0.129435	6.7851
Syria	Pound	0.015935	0.019264	1.0098
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025929	0.031346	1.6432
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000385	0.000466	0.0244

Equitable undercurrents

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

EQUITABLE PCIBanK IS READYING A HOST of measures designed to thwart what looms now as a hostile takeover of the country's third biggest bank by a smaller, but cash-flush Banco de Oro.

Among these measures are a board resolution urging SM heiress Teresita Sy, who resigned her BDO chair to sit as an Equitable PCIBank director, to relinquish her overseeing the bank's crucial executive committee, at least during the pendency of the merger proposal.

The resolution is being pushed by no less than Equitable PCIBank chair Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, in alliance with GSIS president and bank vice chair Winston Garcia. Garcia, who claimed the BDO merger proposal was "disadvantageous," increased the anti-merger heat by saying that "the offer is an insult."

According to the grapevine, Romualdez and Garcia are now discussing, quite belatedly, a shareholders' agreement between GSIS' 12-percent and the Social Security System's 29-percent stakes, and possibly even the sequestered 8-percent Romualdez block, to prevent each of them from being cherry-picked.

It is not clear whether SSS could still be in-

COCKTALES/ B4

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Worsening healthcare by year 2008 attributed to lack of doctors

IT TOOK THIRTY-YEAR OLD Melody Francisco days before she could receive a medical opinion on her one year-old son's asthma, but not for any lack of trying. "*Nag-absent ako sa factory para madala si Carlito sa duktor. Pero kelangan naming bumalik kinabukasan kasi iisa lang ang pedia doon* (I was absent from work so I could bring Carlito to the doctor. But we had to return the next day because there was only one pediatrician there)," Francisco claims. "*Hindi kaya nung duktor lahat ng pasyente* (The doctor found it difficult to see all the patients)."

Francisco's case has become a commonplace occurrence not only in Metro Manila, but all over the country as well. Researchers believe that this worsening state of health care can be largely attributed to a medical exodus, with a sizeable number of doctors, nurses, and other medical practitioners leaving the Philippines to work abroad. By 2008, analysts fear that this will have left the country's heath care in a deplorable state.

According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), in 2004, an estimated 4,000 doctors have already become nurses. Meanwhile, the National Institute of Health Policy and Development has the number of doctors currently studying to become nurses pegged at almost twice the number of new doctors licensed in a year.

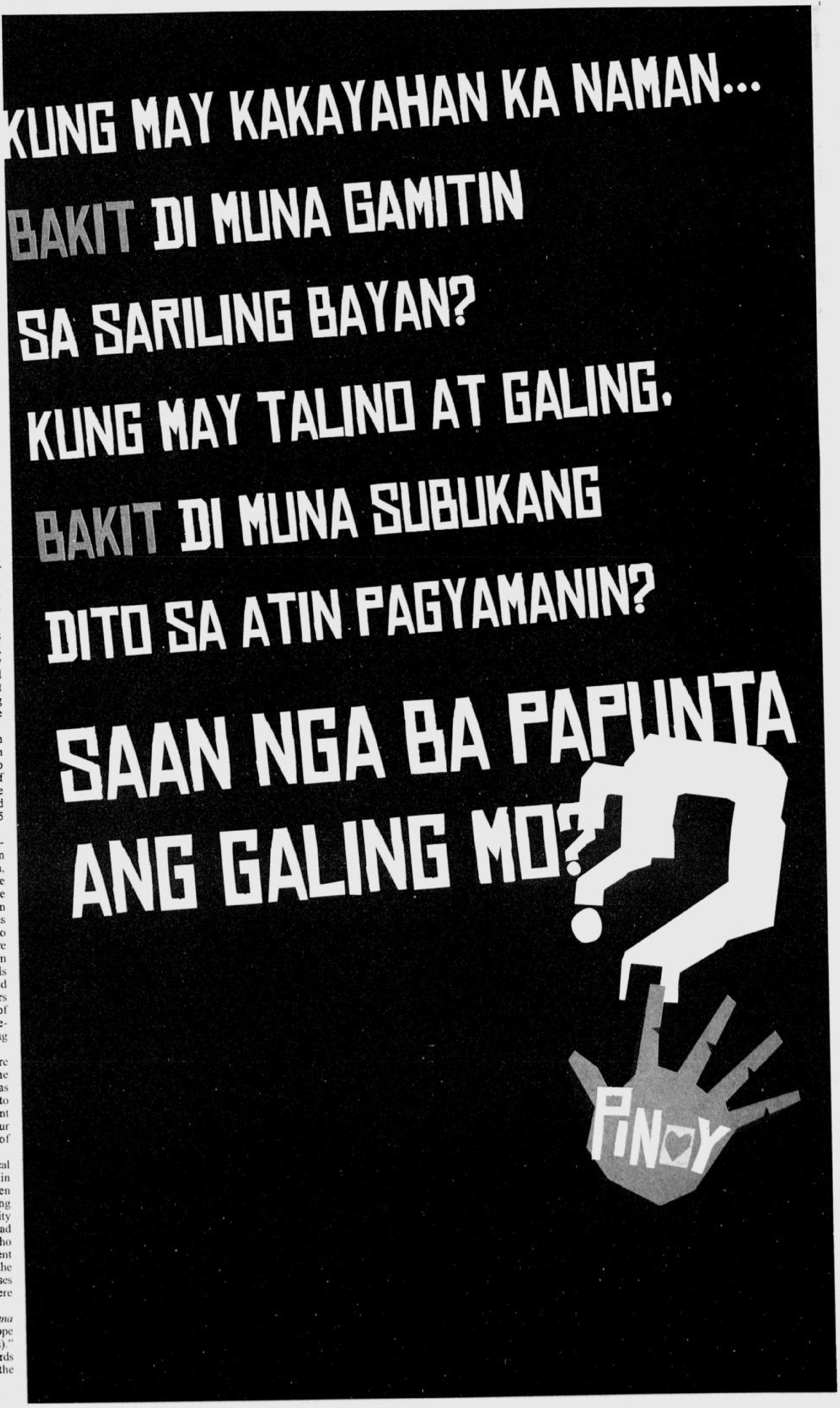
The Professional Regulation Commission notes that the number of registered nurses in the country dipped from 27,272 in 1995 to only 5,874 in 2000, although the number of nursing graduates was reduced by only a little more than 10 percent. Between January and August of 2004 alone, already 7,855 professional nurses have left for abroad.

With most of the nation's already substandard medical service suffering an even worse blow at the hands of labor migration, hospitals and clinics all over the country are now scrambling to compensate for the shortage. A staff member of a well-known private hospital claims that their midwives are already doing medical rounds as only two to three nurses manage an entire ward. More experienced staff members are taking on double shifts. Several state-owned hospitals in Mindanao and Isabela have even closed down in 2004 because of the lack of doctors and nurses in their provinces. The quality of service received in hospitals, whether state-run or privately managed, is rapidly coming into question.

Even the global community is well aware of this trend. British Ambassador to the Philippines Peter Beckingham was quoted as saying that, "One area we obviously need to keep a watch on, more for your government than for ours, is that there is a drain on your own health service. We are very aware of that."

Echoing Beckingham's thoughts, medical experts and analysts are one in saying that, in the end, the nation ultimately suffers when much-needed professionals are slowly being lost from the labor landscape. Their capacity to serve now belongs to other nations, instead of to the likes of Francisco and her son, who are left behind to contend with the current state of Philippine medical service. "Give the nation first option," an unnamed doctor advises colleagues and fresh graduates. "Stay here and serve while you can."

Francisco, though, remains hopeful. "*Sana sa susunod, marami nang duktor ulit* (I hope that next time, there will be more doctors)." In the complex trade-off between the standards of medical service and economic gain, the country needs more assurance than hope.



Yield of 10-year treasury bonds drops below 10%

Improving fiscal outlook draws banks to long-term paper

By Michelle V. Remo

THE RATE FOR THE 10-YEAR treasury bonds dropped to 9.25 percent yesterday as the highly liquid market scrambled for the long-term government securities on improving fiscal outlook.

The new rate for the 10-year debt instrument was 87.5 basis points lower than the 10.125 percent recorded during the December auction for the 10-year bonds. (One percentage point is equivalent to 100 basis points.)

"In the same way that the rates shifted upward when the fiscal performance was weak and poor, it is now shifting downward with the improving fiscal condition," National Treasurer Omar Cruz said in a briefing after the auction.

The market showed strong appetite for the treasury bonds, submitting P7.65 billion worth of bids or almost twice higher than the government's debt offering of only P4 billion.

The Bureau of Treasury's auction committee accepted P4 billion worth of bids.

The government's improving fiscal standing has allowed it to reduce its borrowing requirements for this year, thus reducing the supply of debt instruments in the capital market. With the high level of liquidity that has been propping up demand for the risk-free debt instruments, interest rates are seen to decline this year.

The Treasury originally programmed to borrow P75 billion from the local capital market in the first quarter of this year, 47 percent lower than the P142 billion it borrowed in the same period of last year. But Cruz said the Treasury would adjust its borrowing program to reflect the positive developments on the fiscal front. The revised domestic borrowing program will be announced next week.

Last week, the government sold $2.2 billion worth of dollar- and euro-denominated bonds in the international market, thus raising early in the year the bulk of its $3.1-billion foreign, commercial borrowing requirement for 2006.

The government's ability to raise much of its requirements through the international bond float eases pressure on the need to borrow from local sources.

Officials from the Department of Finance, head agency of the Treasury, attributed the warm response of foreign investors to the recent bond float to the positive outlook on the government's budget position.

The DOF earlier said the deficit for 2005 likely was between P160 billion and P165 billion, much lower than the official target of P180 billion. Cruz said the final figure could even be better than P160 billion.

PAL to stop flights to Riyadh, Kuala Lumpur

From page B1

operations," Bautista said in an interview.

Six national carriers from the various Arab Gulf states already operate a total of 43 flights weekly between Manila, Cebu and nine points in the region. In addition, five East Asian carriers serve the Gulf market from the Philippines with 33 flights weekly via their hubs.

In all, these airlines operate 76 flights per week between the Philippines and the Middle East, with a deployed capacity of over 1.12 million seats a year. However, the traffic in this sector is not much over half a million passengers annually, the vast majority of them Filipino workers.

However, PAL said in a statement it would continue to serve the needs of travelers to the region, particularly Filipino workers, via existing code-share partnerships with Emirates and Qatar Airways. It said it was also in talks with other Middle Eastern carriers to expand and enhance the coverage of its code-share network.

Bautista said the US route has remained the most profitable among PAL's overseas destinations, prompting the flag carrier to consider increasing flight frequency to either San Francisco or Los Angeles.

He earlier said that flights to the East Coast were also being considered. PAL's Vancouver-Las Vegas flights were also doing well, according to the PAL chief.

"But we have used up all our entitlements to Canada so we are still waiting for the government to do something there," he said.

Within the year or in early 2007, Bautista said PAL might start flying to Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in India. Also in the pipeline is a Cebu-Los Angeles flight.

The flag carrier had been reviving routes that are becoming viable again. It launched in November its thrice-a-week flights to Beijing.

PAL, Asia's oldest carrier, used to fly to India but stopped serving the route in 1954.

The Cebu-Los Angeles flights would likely be thrice a week, Bautista said earlier.

Frequency of the trips to India was still under study, he said. He said they recognized the improving traffic going to the highly populated East Asian economy.

Vehicle sales up 10.3% in 2005

From page B1

sible spillover of advance purchases due to the implementation of the higher VAT on vehicles in February.

Commercial vehicle sales cornered 63 percent of the overall market, half of which were accounted for by light commercial vehicles—consisting of pickups, vans, compact sports utility vehicles.

Sales of AUVs grew 16.4 percent to 23,391 units; of LCVs by 8.9 percent to 32,651 units; of light trucks by 4.9 percent to 1,598 units; and of trucks and buses by 23.4 percent to 792 units.

Passenger car sales increased by 7.3 percent to 34,631 units from 33,204 due to introduction of new models and fleet deliveries.

In terms of total sales, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. stayed on the lead with 36.6 percent of the market. It sold 35,513 units in 2005, up by 21.6 percent.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. finished second with 13.4 percent of the market, selling 12,984 units or a 2.1-percent growth on sales in 2005.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. was third with 10 percent of the market although sales shrank by 7.1 percent to 9,797 units.

Cocktales

From page B3

duced into signing such an agreement, considering that SSS president Corazon dela Paz had already signed a previous sale document, now being questioned before the courts, with BDO.

According to the grapevine, an anti-takeover strategy is set to be presented on Tuesday's board meeting, amid the increasing apprehension about job security among Equitable PCIBank's 7,300 officers and staff.

Last week's BDO "merger of equals" proposal undercut a Romualdez directive, given before the bank chair left for the United States before the Yuletide holidays, for Equitable PCIBank president Rene Buenaventura to prepare a merger counterproposal, with this time Equitable PCIBank absorbing BDO.

If the grapevine is to be believed, a gung-ho Buenaventura was supposed to have answered, "It can be done."

Urdaneta assault

SAN RAFAEL, BULACAN Mayor Ricardo Silverio Sr. is filing a clutch of criminal complaints not only against his estranged son, Ricardo Jr., but also against the son's good friends, Marcos son-in-law Greggy Araneta, ex-Makati Councilor Bong Daza and Edvee Cruz in connection with the armed takeover of the patriarch's Urdaneta Village house last weekend.

After an overnight stay, Silverio Jr., 57, eventually vacated the house, but not after his 76-year-old father called in the Makati police.

The patriarch's counsel, Vicente Chuidian, said Araneta was being implicated not only as the owner of the security agency, Securicor, which cleared the guards' entry with the village security detachment, but also on account of his armed guards having allegedly prevented the patriarch's three maids from leaving the "hostaged" premises.

Araneta could not be reached for comment as of press time, and neither could Daza and Cruz.

Accompanied by Daza and Cruz, Silverio Jr. took over 21 Cruzadas St., late afternoon Friday while his father was abroad. His father and his second wife, Rep. Lorna Silverio, arrived the following morning from San Francisco to find themselves locked out of their own home.

The son, who had two lawyers from Fortun Narvasa with him, claimed that the house he grew up in was in the name of a family corporation under his control.

To make a long story short, the recalcitrant son had no choice but to leave the disputed residence after a check with the village association office showed that the owner's registration documents were all in the name of the old man, filled out no less in the patriarch's own handwriting.

Money-go-round

- EXPORT and Industry Bank chair Sergio Ortiz-Luis said the bank had voluntarily asked the Philippine Stock Exchange to suspend trading of the bank shares to prevent speculative and insider trading while the bank's capital restructuring is underway.
- AB Capital has named Francis Varela as president of the investment house, vice the newly retired Filomeno Francisco.

Heard through the grapevine

SSS president Corazon dela Paz has recovered well enough from her pre-Christmas operation and Hyatt 10 misadventure to continue as chief of the Social Security System.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
San Ramon, Zamboanga City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

ROAD OPENING AT THE ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd INDUSTRIAL PARK (SEAFRONT - PHASE I)

1. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA), through the Corporate Operating Budget 2005 intends to apply the sum of **EIGHT MILLION SEVENTY-SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN PESOS & 95/100 ONLY (P8,076,697.95)** being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **"Road Opening at the ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd Industrial Park (Seafront-Phase I)"** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening
2. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authroity (ZCSEZA) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the **"Road Opening at the ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd Industrial Park (Seafront-Phase I)"**. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs and secure the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P 200.00) on January **12 - 17, 2006 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building.** Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents on **January 25, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.
4. Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the **BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building** on or before **January 25, 2006.**
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P2,500.00)**. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on **January 26 - February 10, 2006** during office hours.
6. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on **January 30, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.**
7. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **February 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM.**

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form:

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
Cash, Certified Check, Cashiers' Check, or Manager's Check	One Percent (1%)
GSIS Surety Bond	Two and a half Percent (2 ½ %)

Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **February 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below on February 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM.

8. Completion of the Works is required by 120 calendar days.
9. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **GEORGINA PANTALEON-YU**
Chairman and Administrator
Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority
Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City
(062) 992-0409, (062) 993-0209
E-mail: Ecozone_bac@yahoo.com

(PDI--Jan. 4 & 11, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
11th Judicial Region
BRANCH 10
Davao City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION
FOR CORPORATE REHABILITATION OF

SP. PROC. NO. 8406-05

J. S. GAISANO, INC.,
Petitioner
x-----------------------------------x

STAY ORDER

By this PETITION, J. S. Gaisano Inc., a domestic corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Philippines, with principal offices at 76 cor. Suazo and Sta. Ana Streets, Davao City, seeks the approval of its Rehabilitation Plan attached to the petition as Annex "F"

Petitioner alleged that is was primarily established to engage in the business of retail merchandising and was, until 1992, the leading mall operator in Davao City, employing more then 2,000 employees and workers, if further alleged that after its incorporation in 1976 its established other stores so that in 1988 established in Tagum, Davao del Norte the JS Gaisano which at that time was the most advanced supermarket and department store in the locality. It varied its services from merchandising to food and was in the midst of further expansion when it was hit by fire in 1994, which gutted its store and food centers. It has accordingly achieved the reputation of being a merchandising expert and was awarded "The Most Outstanding Countryside Investor of the Year" by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry. However, because of the upsurge of interest rate resulting from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 it experience financial problems from bank creditors. To solve this, it sold its main mall at V. Ilustra St., Davao City to pay its creditors leaving the Development Bank of the Philippines as its lone bank creditor, holding seven valuable properties in Matina totaling 17 hectares.

Petitioner admits that it has adequate assets to jumpstart its business in another form. It has still its Matina properties which allegedly the Sta. Lucia Development Corporation has expressed its willingness to lend its properties, credits, expertise and personnel to develop the same in into a mixed residential and commercial subdivision. Hence, petitioner prays for the issuance of an order to stay all claims against it in the meantime that the rehabilitation plan is under consideration.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin, of 0101 Basilan corner Davao Sts., Insular Village II, Lanang, Davao City, Philippines petitioner's nominee is hereby appointed rehabilitation receiver in accordance with the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation, which took effect on December 15, 2000. Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin is required to post a bond hereby fixed at ONE MILLION (P1,000,000.00) PESOS in favor of J. S. Gaisano, Inc. to guarantee the faithful performance of his functions as receiver. He is directed to signify his acceptance or non-acceptance of this appointment within then (10) days from receipt of this order.

The enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the debtor is hereby STAYED.

The petitioner is hereby prohibited from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing, in any manner, of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

It is prohibited from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as of the date of filing of the petition.

The suppliers of goods and services of the petitioner are prohibited from withholding supplies thereof in the ordinary course of business as long as the latter pays for services and goods supplied after the issuance of this stay order.

The petitioner is hereby directed to pay in full all administrative, liabilities to be incurred after the issuance of this STAY ORDER.

The initial hearing of this petition is hereby set on January 25, 2006, at 8:30 in the morning. The petitioner is directed to cause the publication of this Order in the Philippine Daily Inquirer once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks starting not later than seven (7) days from the issuance of this order.

All creditors and all other interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are hereby directed to file and serve on the petitioner and upon this Court a verified comment on or opposition to the petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing and putting them on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings.

The creditors and interested parties are hereby directed to secure from the Court copies of the petition and its annexes within such time as to enable themselves to file their comment and/or opposition to the petition and to prepare for the initial hearing on January 25, 2006, otherwise they will be barred from participating in the proceedings of this case.

The petitioner is hereby directed to immediately serve a copy of this Order and the Petition with Annexes on Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin, who is requested to manifest his acceptance or non-acceptance of his appointment not later than ten (10) days from receipt of this Order.

SO ORDERED.

Given this 28th day of December 2005, at Davao City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) JAIME V. QUITAIN
Judge

Copy furnished:

Atty. Marcial O. T. Balgos
1009 West Tektite Tower, PSEC Bldg.
Exchange Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin
0101 Basilan Corner Davao Sts.
Insular Village II, Lanang
Davao City

Securities and Exchange Commission
Juna Subdivision, Matina
Davao City

The Acting Clerk of Court
Hall of Justice
Ecoland, Davao City

(PDI - Jan. 4 & 11, 2006)

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ESTAFA CHARGES IN I.S. No. PSG-03-10-17735

RELEASE, WAIVER AND QUITCLAIM

I, **ROLEX T. SUPLICO**, of legal age, married, Filipino, a resident of Urdaneta Avenue, Urdaneta Village, Makati, Metro Manila, after been sworn to in accordance with law, hereby deposes and states that:

1. I was formerly a partner of the law partnership of **Raval Suplico & Lokin** with office address at 4/F Amberland Plaza, Dona J. Vargas Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City and have formally withdrawn from the said law partnership effective Jan. 15, 1995.

2. For valuable consideration receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I hereby waive all my rights and interests over the law partnership of **Raval Suplico & Lokin** in favor of **Demaree Raval** and **Luis Lokin** and hereby release and forever discharge the law partnership of **Raval Suplico & Lokin**, including its successor-in-interest, the **Raval & Lokin Law Firm**, its partners, officers and agents, from any action or for any obligation arising from my being a partner in the partnership of **Raval Suplico & Lokin** including any cause of action arising or which may have arisen from my being a partner in said law partnership or from my withdrawal therefrom;

3. Moreover, by virtue of the attached Deed of Assignment I hereby waive in favor of **Demaree Raval and Luis Lokin** and the **Raval & Lokin Law Firm**, all my rights, interests and participation over the Condominium Unit No. 410, Amberland Plaza, located at Dona Julia Vargas Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

4. I hereby undertake to maintain the confidentiality of all matters, information, records, and other data that which came to my knowledge, directly or indirectly, by virtue of my being a partner in the law partnership of **Raval Suplico & Lokin;**

6. I declare that I have read this document, and confirm that the release, waiver and quitclaim hereby given is made willingly and voluntarily with full knowledge of my rights under the law.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 8th day of July 2000 at Makati City.

ROLEX T. SUPLICO

Signed in the Presence of:

J. Manuel F. Arominio

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 8th day of July, 2000 at Makati City, affiant exhibiting to me his Community Tax Certificate No. 08383586 issued on January 12, 2000 at Estancia, Iloilo.

Doc. No. 236
Page No. 47
Book No. 2
Series of 2000.

CITY OF MAKATI

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(PDI-January 11, 2006)

Dutch ING Bank bullish on RP's 2006 prospects

By Doris C. Dumlao

DUTCH FINANCIAL GIANT ING BANK IS bullish on the Philippines' 2006 prospects, betting on a more resilient economic growth and better government fiscal standing that could merit the country a sovereign credit rating upgrade as early as this quarter.

Visiting ING official Eric Boyer de la Giroday, a member of the ING Group executive board and global head for wholesale banking, also shrugged off sporadic political noises in the country as cause for concern, citing the "impressive" performance of the bank's Philippines operations "whether in good or bad weather."

"The Philippines is a large and vocal democracy [having its] high and low points," Boyer de la Giroday said in a press briefing late Monday afternoon. "But having been present in this country for 15 years and having observed at different moments the normal process of democracy, it's not a particular subject of concern for us.

The implementation of the VAT reform package, which involves the removal of exemptions and an increase in the rate to 12 percent from 10 percent this February, is seen by investors as the stabilizing measure that could help tide the government over the medium term.

Manuel Salak III, ING Bank's country manager for the Philippines, said the potential credit upgrade and the entry of more foreign investors would give the bank more opportunities in wholesale banking.

According to the Dutch bank, a ratings upgrade is possible this year, given the fiscal measures to be implemented in February, which are expected to balance the government budget by 2008 or earlier than the original target of 2010.

This year, ING expects the Philippines to post a stronger gross domestic product growth of 5 percent against the estimated 4.8 percent registered in 2005.

ING also forecast that the peso would trade at 52-52.50:$1 by year's end, against the 53.10 level of last year.

Gov't agencies seek realistic revenue targets

By Michelle V. Remo

FINANCE OFFICIALS ARE STUDYING whether the collection targets of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs could be trimmed to "more realistic" figures in light of the Lateral Attrition Law expected to take effect this year.

The Lateral Attrition Law, one of the fiscal reform measures of the Arroyo administration, provides a reward and penalty system for tax and duty collectors to shore up scant government revenues. The incentives or penalties shall be based on the collectors' performance relative to official targets.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee, the interagency body tasked with setting the government's economic policies and targets, has tasked the BIR to collect P675.353 billion for this year, and required the BOC to collect P190.452 billion.

The law provides that the official targets be the basis for the evaluation of the performance of BIR and BOC revenue collectors.

But to ease the burden on collectors, brought on by the Lateral Attrition Law, Finance Undersecretary Gaudencio Mendoza Jr. said the DOF would review the targets and find out if the figures could still be reduced.

The 2006 official tax collection target assigned to the BIR is 23 percent higher than its P546.9-billion goal for 2005.

The BIR likely missed its 2005 target.

The revenue target for the BOC, on the other hand, is 25 percent higher than its 2005 target of P151.2 billion.

BIR: Sin products through freeports still subject to tax

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ITS attached agency the Bureau of Internal Revenue have ruled that imported alcohol and tobacco products, even if bound for tax and duty-free shops via freeports, are subject to excise tax.

The DOF and the BIR issued Revenue Regulation No. 3-2006 asserting their stand. The regulation provides the guidelines for the Sin Tax law that was implemented last year.

The law raised the tax rates imposed on cigarettes and alcohol for the purpose of increasing the government's revenue collection.

The DOF and the BIR's stand runs counter to that of the Olongapo City Regional Trial Court. In June last year, the court issued an injunction to the BIR, preventing it from collecting excise tax on sin products entering through the Subic Bay Freeport.

In making its decision, the court cited Republic Act No. 7227, which states that no tax, whether on the local or national level, could be imposed within the Subic Bay Freeport except for the 5-percent gross income tax.

But the BIR questioned the ruling of the court, saying it has no jurisdiction over the matter. The BIR said such cases could only be handled by the Court of Tax Appeals.

The BIR also stressed that the new Sin Tax law, superseded the law exempting imported tobacco and alcohol from excise tax.

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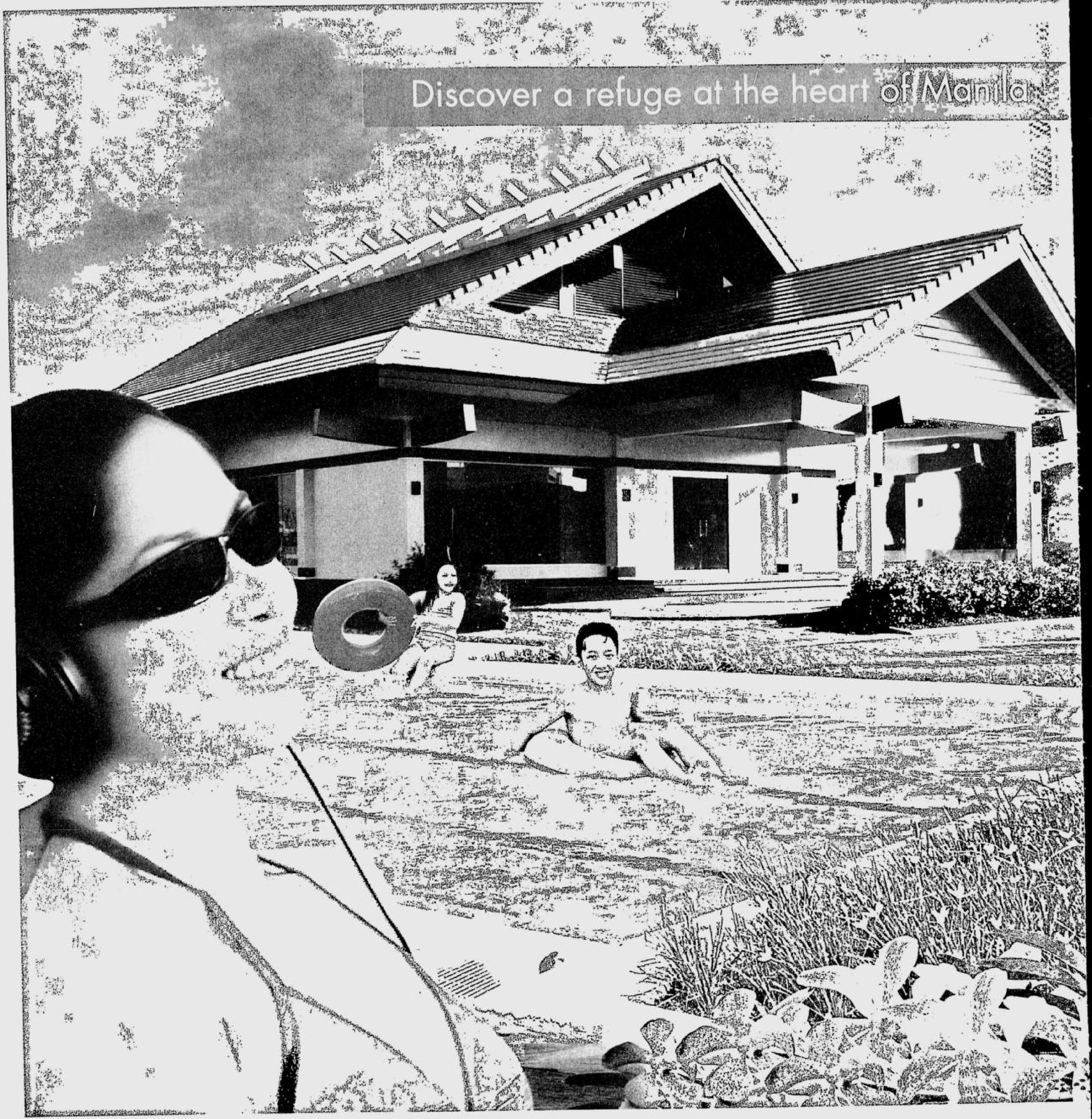
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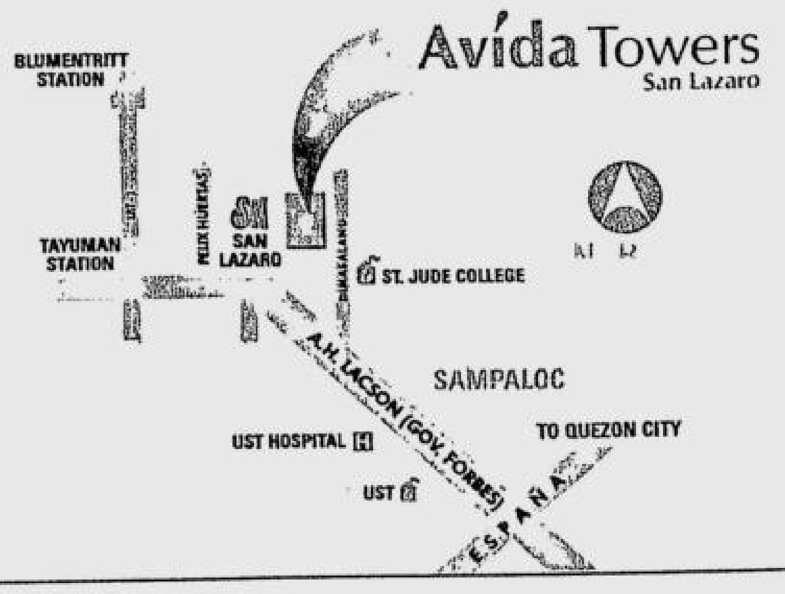
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Avida will continue using the building systems which account for the consistent quality of LPHI homes.

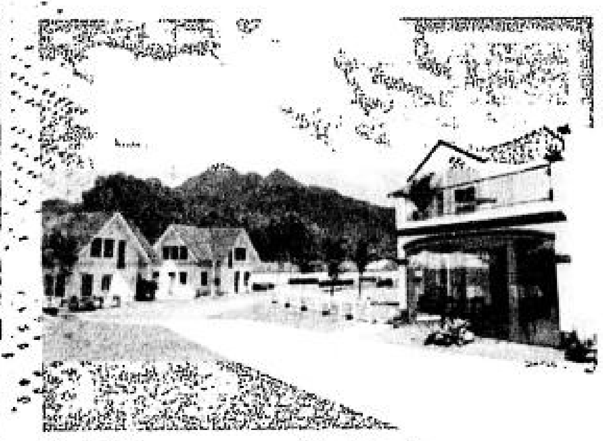
Amenities at Avida villages boast of landscaped gardens, an inviting swimming pool and a clubhouse for residents to enjoy.

Reflective of its dynamic presence in the middle-income market, property developer Laguna Properties Holdings, Inc. (LPHI), recently changed its name to Avida Land Corp. The Ayala Land, Inc. subsidiary is the leading provider of homes in the P500,000 to P2.5 million price range.

Avida Land Corp. President Dinna Bayangos with Ayala Land President and Avida Land Corp. Chairman Jaime Ayala.

True to its name, LPHI was established in 1991 to cater to the housing needs of employees and junior executives in the Ayala Land-developed portion of Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Today, the company has evolved into a multi-line property developer with 27 projects in 13 locations throughout the Philippines. From houses and lots, it has expanded to also providing residential condominiums in convenient city locations.

Avida president Dinna Bayangos notes that the new name and festive red logo better reflect the position of the company in relation to its mission and the aspirations of its clients. She explains : "Our goal is to provide Filipino families with affordable homes in ideal communities that will secure their future."



Mt. Makiling serves as a scenic backdrop to Avida's Sto. Tomas project.

The new name is coined from "Ave" or "celebrate" and "vida" or "life". It was inspired by a brand study conducted by a leading consultant that revealed how much LPHI residents appreciate and find security in their new homes and communities. They feel a strong sense of pride in owning a home developed by an Ayala Land subsidiary and view this as a reason to celebrate life.

Company executives assure its buyers and homeowners that Avida will continue to live up to what LPHI stood for in the past 15 years-affordability, security and value.

The Ayala Land subsidiary likewise upholds the values of reliability, integrity and commitment, which have been closely linked with its parent company through the years.

Basketball courts and open spaces are welcome features that complete ideal community living at Avida developments.

The management team behind the leading provider of affordable homes and communties for Filipino families.

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Counting their many blessings

To the Overseas Filipino Worker abroad, the sacrifice of being separated from family and familiar surroundings is often compensated for by stable earnings and the opportunity to afford a house and lot for the family.

In fact, a significant number of Avida Land clients are Filipinos working abroad who have been exposed to better living and housing standards in Europe and other global capitals. Along with professionals, entrepreneurs and employees, they make up the market of this Ayala Land subsidiary focused on affordable homes.

Neliana Belarmino takes pride in their home in Sta. Catalina Village.

Whatever walk of life they come from, homeowners of the formerly known Laguna Properties Holdings, Inc., share a common sentiment: pride and security in owning a home, backed up by a reliable and respected developer.

Arturo and Arlene Corpus ended their quest for clean air and green surroundings when they moved to their Cavite home.

Seaman Arturo Corpus of Sta. Catalina Village relates that he was raised in a tough neighborhood in Pasay City. He and wife Arlene initially rented an apartment when they married. But when their firstborn began suffering from frequent asthma attacks, they decided to move to cleaner and fresher surroundings. Now home on his annual one-month vacation, he takes pride in their four-bedroom house and serene environment where he knows his children will be secure and healthy.

Bessie Guillermo : Secure in her Avida community.

Another Sta. Catalina resident, Bessie Guillermo, lived in Sta. Cruz, Manila, before she transferred to Cavite in early 2005.

Even if husband Elmer left last December to work as security officer of a European luxury ship, Bessie feels secure in Sta. Catalina, which like other LPHI developments, offers residents good security, in addition to water and electric supply, village management and recreational facilities.

Because of these features, Bessie became an LPHI sales agent and showcases her own house to prospective home buyers.

Bessie, Jen and their neighbors reveal that they landscaped their front yards and turned it into one collective garden, so their young families can converge there in the afternoons and evenings. The green space, they say, is a good place to relax and count their blessings in peaceful surroundings.

The amenities and facilities in well-maintained and secure communities of Avida assure families of a dream home finally realized.

Avida Towers sets new condo benchmarks

Avida Towers San Lazaro is bound to set new living standards in the City of Manila.

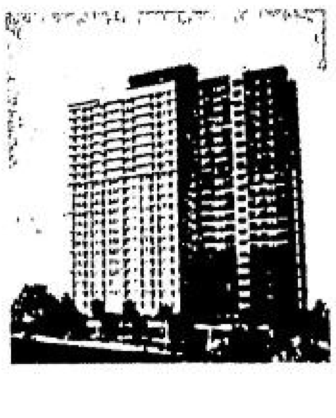
Three years after the former Laguna Properties Holdings, Inc. (LPHI) broke ground with its first condominium project in Parañaque, the company now renamed Avida Land Corp., is once again launching a residential condominium development in Manila. Avida Towers San Lazaro is its third multi-tower project that seeks to satisfy the huge pent-up demand for affordable units in superior, central locations.

A student is free from stress and inconvenience of daily commuting and appreciates lounging at home during the day without artificial lighting.

Focused on serving young families, single professionals, entrepreneurs and students who dislike long commutes, the property developer is ready to meet the strong demand for its units.

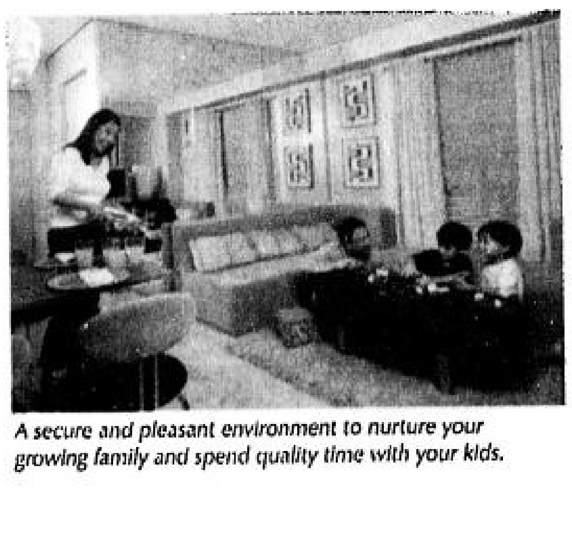
Condo buyers have a choice of studio units, one-bedroom units, or two-bedroom units with price ranging from P1 million to P3.4 million. Units with lofts are also available.

Avida's high-rise projects offer quality of life in the midst of the city. Large windows let in the air and natural light, as well as views of the busy city. Moreover, each of the developments offers residents generous green and open spaces for exercise, relaxation and breaths of fresh air. Common amenities include a clubhouse, swimming pool and playground. Best of all, 24/7 security, perimeter fences, adequate power and water supply, and property managers assure residents of well-managed facilities and secure surroundings. These are easily accessible to public transport, schools, business districts, hospitals and commercial centers.



Aeropolis New Manila, like other Avida projects, are marketed in Rome, Milan, UK and Dubai where the company is represented.

Families of overseas employees, entrepreneurs, professionals and young families now reside in One Aeropolis, which broke new ground for the company three years ago.



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For more information about Avida, visit their website at www.avidaland.com or call 864-5744 for more details.

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For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on **January 19, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to and registered with the PNOC-EDC Procurement and Materials Management Division, at the above address and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than 2:00 p.m. (Procurement Department Office Wall Clock time) on **February 2, 2006**. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**

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Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee I

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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Alfredo Ablera & Jessie Ablera was extrajudicially settled by their heirs before Notary Public Atty. Thomas M. Valmonte of Valenzuela City per Doc. No. 467, Page No. 90, Book No. II, Series of 2006. (PDI-Jan. 11, 18 & 25, 2006)

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(PDI- Dec 29 2005 Jan 4 & 11 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED PRICE DETERMINATION METHODOLOGY (PDM) FOR THE PHILIPPINE ELECTRICITY SPOT MARKET (WESM)

ERC CASE NO. 2003-356

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE), THROUGH THE PHILIPPINE ELECTRICITY MARKET CORPORATION – MARKET OPERATOR
Applicant.
x-----------------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing on January 6, 2006 by the Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC) for its *"Manifestation and Compliance"* to the *"Order"* of the Commission dated 23 November 2005 relative to the instant application for the approval of the proposed Price Determination Methodology (PDM) for the Philippine Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM).

The Commission has set the said application for hearing on January 24, 2006 at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 A.M.) at the ERC – Board Room, 16th Floor Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. All parties who have submitted their comments and/or opposition during the Public Consultation held for the instant application are already deemed as Parties of Record and need not file the same comments and/or opposition unless they wish to amplify the same or add thereon. Anyone who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by PEMC, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorables **OLIVER B. BUTALID, JESUS N. ALCORDO, RAUF A. TAN** and **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN**, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, January 9, 2006 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) **FRANCISCO JOSE S. VILLA, JR.**
Director III

(PDI–January 11 & 18, 2006)

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephones (632) 5513438 • 5513454 • Facsimile (632) 5513436
E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • Website: www. peza.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid for the Janitorial, Messengerial & Other Manpower Requirements of PEZA

1. The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), through its Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2006 intends to apply the sum of PhP 6,136,680.28 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Janitorial, Messengerial and Other Manpower Requirements of PEZA. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PEZA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Janitorial, Messengerial and Other Manpower Requirements of PEZA. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last three (3) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the PEZA and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during office hours, Mondays to Fridays.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from 06 to 13 January 2006, Mondays to Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of PhP2,500.00 and submission of a certified copy of their G-EPS Certificate of Registration. The method of payment will be cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 17 January 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, Almeda Building III, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. of 31 January 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than 1% of the ABC. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on 31 January 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor Social Hall, Almeda Bldg. III Roxas Blvd. corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.
10. The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3/F Almeda Building III Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City
Tel. No. 891-6444 / Telefax No. 551-9587
E-mail: peza_bac_secretariat@yahoo.com
Website: www.peza.gov.ph

THE CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Jan. 5 & 11, 2006)

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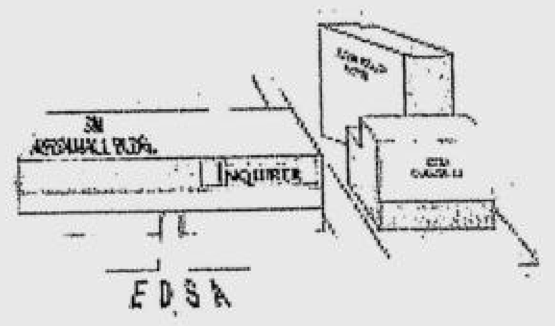

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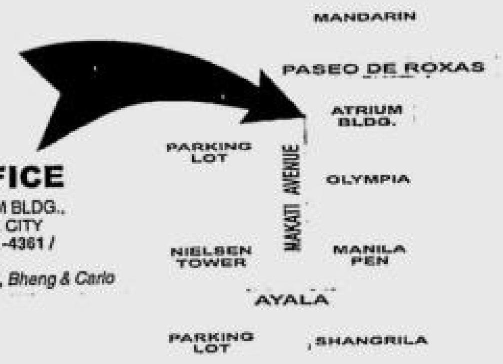

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Contact Persons: Emy, Tin², Bheng & Carlo

Pura Ocampo Reynoso

August 13, 1913 - January 7, 2006

Widow of Bibiano L. Reynoso

Beloved Nanay to: Teresita, Bibiano II (†), Norma, Carmelita, Bibiano III (†), Bibiano IV, Imelda, Wilhelmina, Ma. Corazon, Ma. Luisa, Bibiano V, Bibiano VI, Ma. Celina, Bibiano VII, Blesilda and Milagros; sons/daughters-in-law, loving LOLA to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels-Premier I, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 12, 2006 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

"For God
so loved the
world, that He
gave His only
begotten Son,
that whoever
believes in
Him shall not
perish but have
everlasting
life."
John 3:16

ATTY. JOSE DE LEON ALTRE, JR.

of Mandaluyong City

*Peacefully joined his Supreme Judge & Creator and his parents **Dr. Jose V. Altre & Primitiva de Leon** on January 8, 2006 at the age of 77.*

His loving brothers & sister & in-laws: **Gading** & Ester, **Zaling** & Pining, **Danny, Jess & Tessie**; nieces & nephews and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for his eternal repose.

His remains lie in state at Chapel N, Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe & will be transferred to Presidential Suite today, January 11, 2006 at 4:00 p.m.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 15, 2006 after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Presidential Suite.

OUR DEAREST
AND BELOVED

Rizalina Aragon Alonso

Peacefully joined her Creator on January 9, 2006 at the age of 90.

Her surviving sister **Aurora Oabel**; children **Benjamin & Gening Alonso, Virginia & Jose Mendoza, Dino & Andrea Alonso, Vener & Antonio Castillo, Violeta & Onnie Soliman; Lucy Agora** and all grandchildren and other relatives and friends request the readers to pray for her Eternal Peace and Happiness in Heaven.

Her remains lie in state at her residence in Tayabas, Quezon.

Interment will be on January 12, 2006, Thursday at Lovely Paradise, Tayabas, Quezon after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at St. Michael's Basilica.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring... **INQUIRER OBITUARIES**

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate; ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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CLASSIFIEDS

UPGRADE 2006: The 17th UP Diliman Job Fair

EXPECTING GRADUATION? Looking for the perfect employer? Grab your resumés and brush up on the interview basics as the University of the Philippines Office of Counseling and Guidance and the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants stage UPGRADE 2006, the 17th University Job Fair. The event will be held from January 23-27, 2006 at the heart of UP Diliman, at the Bahay ng Alumni. The entire graduating class of the University is expected to participate in this annual event.

Everyone is enjoined to participate and be part of this grand event. Companies who are interested to put up booths and participate in the event are most welcome. For any inquiries, please do contact the following numbers: Tel. No./Fax No.: 926.4162 or Tel No.: 929.5835 or email us at upjobfair2006@yahoo.com. You may also contact the organizing committee through: 0917.8158540 (Jill); 0919.5608386 (Maila); 0915.4082972 (Pete); 0916.2034170 (Kristy); 0917.8584532 (Crystle).

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Central Regional Office Luzon Office
Cabanatuan City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

FOR GRAINS HANDLING SERVICES OF NFA REGION III (RE-BIDDING)

The National Food Authority, NFA Central Luzon Regional Office, Cabanatuan City invites all interested Grains Handling Services Contractors to apply for eligibility and to rebid for handling the movement of grain stocks and by-products in the warehouses, ricemills and other installations of Region III and to load/unload to/from trucks said commodities with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for the year 2006 as follows:

PROVINCES	LOT NO	LOCATION OF WAREHOUSE	VOLUME TO BE HANDLED (IN BAGS)	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
Bulacan	I	TLL Whses – Marilao	1,197,750	P 5,797,110.00
Nueva Ecija	II	Whse 1-13-Cab City	1,428,400	6,942,024.00
		Whse 1 & 2 – Gapan		
	III	Aliaga Whse – Aliaga	265,500	1,290,330.000
		GID-Bongabon		
		Guimba Whse 1-2		
Pampanga	IV	Sindalan 1 and 2	523,800	2,472,336.00
	V	Del Rosario Whse	190,000	896,800.00
		TOTAL	3,605,450	P 17,398,600.00

The prospective bidder may bid in any or all lots upon payment of a non-refundable application fee of P500.00, bidding fee of P2,500.00 and submission of a certified photocopy each of the following documents:

1) DTI business name registration, CDA Registration and/or SEC registration certificate, whichever may be appropriate.
2) Valid and current Mayor's Permit/Official Receipt

The issuance of bid documents, pre-bidding conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at NFA-CLRO, Conference Room, Cabanatuan City on the following schedule:

PARTICULARS	DATE
1. Issuance of Application and Bidding Documents	January 12 – February 02, 2006
2. Pre-Bidding Conference	February 03, 2006, (10:00 A.M.)
3. Deadline of submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of Bids will follow immediately)	February 17, 2006 (10:00 A.M.)

Eligibility criteria includes, among others that the value of the prospective bidder's largest single contract, adjusted to current prices using the wholesale consumer price index completed and similar to the contract to be bid, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

The bidding shall be governed by RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman or Secretariat at NFA-CLRO, Cabanatuan City with Telephone Nos. (044)-463-1167, (044)-463-1168 and (044)-463-1233.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **RUBEN J. RESIDE**
Asst. Regional Director
RBAC Chairman

(PDI–January 11 & 18, 2006)

Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte

Contract Reference Number
Name of the Contract
Location of the Contract

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Government of the Philippines through the Department of Land Reform (DLR) has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contracts of Rural Infrastructure Component for which this Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid is issued.

The Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) as Medium "A" or higher for similar contract to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract.

Name of Contract	Improvement San Vicente-Butadon-Sta. Cruz-GMA Loop FMR
Location	SBS ARC, Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte
Brief Description	Concreting of 5.100 kms. Farm to Market Road
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Php 42,319,348.19
Contract Duration	154 Calendar Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	January 17, 2006 - January 24, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	January 17, 2006 - January 24, 2006
3. Deadline of Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	January 24, 2006
4. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	January 30, 2006
5. Issuance of Bid Documents	January 30, 2006 - February 10, 2006
6. Pre-bid Conference	February 17, 2006, 9:00 AM
7. Receipt and Opening of Bids	March 1, 2006 not later than 10:00 AM

Minimum Required Equipment:

No. of Units	Description
1	Concrete Paver
1	Concrete Batching Plant
1	Water Truck
2	Road Grader
1	Bulldozer D83
1	Concrete Saw
2	Payloader
1	Concrete Vibrator
10	Dumptruck 10 wheelers
1	Chain Saw
1	Backhoe EX 100
2	Road Roller Vibratory

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Office of the BAC Secretariat, Gov. Arsenio A. Quibranza Provincial Government Center, Pigcarangan, Tubod, Lanao del Norte, upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of Seven Hundred Fifty Pesos only (P750.00) to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte's Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the following forms:

1. Cash/certified check/cashier's check/manager's check in the amount of one percent (1%) of ABC which is P423,193.48;
2. Surety Bond which is two and a half percent (2.5%) of ABC in the amount of P1,057,983.70 callable on demand and issued by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) or by a reputable surety or insurance company and to be posted in favor of the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Fifteen Thousand Pesos only (P15,000.00) to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte's Cashier.

The Province of Lanao del Norte reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, and waive any informality or technicality, and to award to any bidder whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte. The Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte neither assumes any obligation for any loss whatsoever that may be incurred by the bidder on the preparation of their respective bids nor does the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte guarantee that an award will be made.

Approved by

(Sgd.) **MILDRED J. HINGCO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Jan 4 & 11, 2006)

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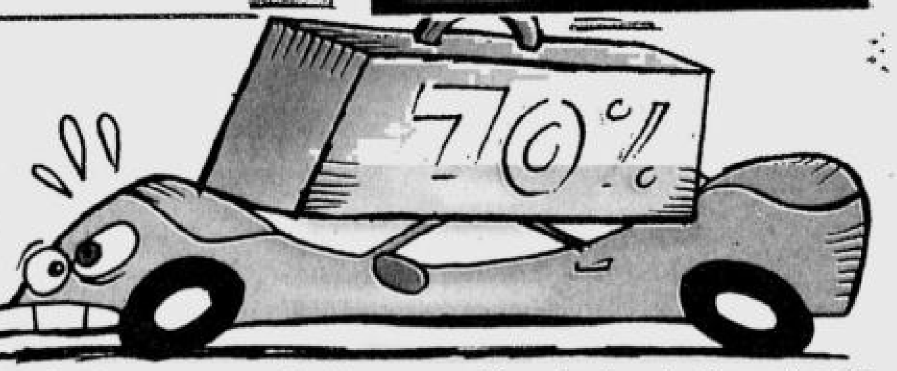
Automakers call 70% VAT cap provision 'antigrowth'



By Tessa R. Salazar

First of two parts

WITH THE YEAR JUST starting, automakers are already saying they are now feeling the pinch of the 70 percent VAT (valued added tax) cap implemented in November last year by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The country's largest automotive manufacturing group, the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi), has reiterated that the cap should be repealed, or at least be reduced to a more reasonable level.

Campi is asking for a review of the implementation of the revisions on BIR RR 16-2005 to provide relief for the auto industry and others feeling the "ruinous effect of the 70 percent cap on our business."

Says Campi president Elizabeth Lee: "Our industry does not operate with a gross margin of 30 percent. We experience significant swings in sales volume both as an industry and as individual firms, due to high competitive pressures, price increases due to foreign exchange fluctuations as well as market sensitivity to economic and political conditions."

Accordingly, in the normal course of the automotive business, the possibility of each company's input VAT exceeding that of its output VAT in a quarter is high.

Grave threat

"Any cap on creditable input VAT poses a grave threat to the very existence of individual businesses and a clear deterrent to the growth of the automotive sector and other industries as well as the economy in general," says Lee.

On VAT Payable per Section 4.110-7 of the RR, the new provision allows full crediting of input tax if it does not exceed output tax. However, if input tax including carry-over tax exceeds output tax, only the equivalent of 70 percent of output tax can be credited.

Lee says that as business cannot absorb the cost entailed by such a cap, an additional burden to the already suffering consumers is unwittingly created as prices of vehicles would have to be increased.

"The impact of the 70 percent cap on input VAT on every industry member's cash flow and possibly its financial viability is of great concern. It would, among others, entail cost of money which will undoubtedly be a strain to each company," she adds.

According to Lee, it is the industry's position that passing on to consumers any added cost or later increase in VAT cannot be the solution as any further rise in prices of vehicles will consequently lessen an already "weak" demand.

Mel Dizon, Campi vice president, says that with the new provision, the right to free enterprise as stipulated in the constitution has been "violated." He explains that BIR RR 16-2005 restricts the "right of citizens to pursue legitimate economic activity."

Some scenarios

Dizon cites some scenarios of how BIR RR 16-2005 prescribes and limits inventory level options for business.

- When sales suffer a downturn against production schedules or a stocking program. Inventory is piled up at the end of the quarter. This type of business reversal can easily get a business VAT capped.
- When the minimum order or economic order quantity of a key material input is equal to several months' sales and the business does not operate with high enough margins to offset the inventory.
- When a business has an expansion or a new product and must build up inventory for materials, in process inventory and finished goods inventory within a start-up period of one quarter. In this case even before the new business starts, the firm is already VAT capped.
- When a business has increasing sales and has to stock up to support sales.
- When a business has to shut down operations for a few months for plant modernization or some other reason. The business has enough resources to accumulate inventory to cover, for example, three months of sales over three months of production.

Danny Isla, senior vice president of Toyota, says dealers would be less aggressive with the 70 percent E-VAT cap, thereby "slowing down" the business.

"For example, if they know they can sell 200 units, they will just order 120 or 150 so they will be on the safe side. Otherwise, *malulugi sila* (they will lose money)," says Isla

"Because of the peculiarity and volatility of the Philippine market, it is hard to produce a precise forecast brought about by the peso value and political issues," adds Isla in a phone interview.

(Next week: What the BIR has to say about RR 16-2005)

A biodiesel story

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

TWO YEARS AGO IN HAWAII, the wife of an aging but still popular American country singer wanted to buy a car that runs on biodiesel. Willie Nelson did not even know what biodiesel was and thought the whole thing was a scam or a joke when she explained it to him. But he told her to go ahead for after all, it was her money.

Mrs. Nelson bought a Volkswagen Jetta with a diesel engine and loaded it with fuel made from restaurant grease. This was not unusual since home hobbyists make their own biodiesel by collecting used frying oil from restaurants and chemically treating it to convert it to fuel or by fitting their car or truck with equipment to reform the grease. Aside from soybean, coconut, peanut, safflower and sunflower oil, biodiesel can be made from beef fat and chicken fat.

Like French fries

But going back to Willie Nelson, he got curious. He drove his wife's new car and loved the way it drove. "The tailpipe smells like French fries," he told a New York Times reporter who quotes him in a recent article. Nelson was so impressed that he bought a brand-new Mercedes and filled it up with 100 percent vegetable oil from the grease traps of Maui. (The Mercedes sales staff must have been glad that they were in Hawaii, since pure biodiesel can congeal in colder climates.)

Nonetheless, Nelson claims that: he got better fuel mileage, the car ran better and the motor ran cleaner. Since then, Willie Nelson, 72, has been promoting alternative fuels by selling his own brand, BioWillie diesel, at 13 gas stations and truck stops in four US states, mostly in Texas, his home state. In the United States, the market for biodiesel blends consists of buses and trucks since there are very few diesel-fed passenger cars on the road.

Although Nelson has teamed up with Earth Biofuels to distribute his brand, he has a long way to go, what with only 650 of the nearly 200,000 US gas stations nationwide selling biodiesel. As one car manufacturer's advanced technology engineer remarked, biodiesel is a "boutique fuel" as there is not enough payoff and not enough people into it. Still, Nelson is enthusiastically pushing ahead with his crusade to help free his country from heavy dependence on foreign oil and in the process help the farmers and the environment.

Environment

Not all environmentalists agree that the widespread use of biodiesel will help the environment. While biodiesel would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 80 percent and sulfur oxide by almost 100 percent, some studies indicate that it increases emissions of nitrogen oxide, a harmful pollutant. The Sierra Club's top global warming expert said that a cleaner alternative fuel like natural gas is better. He pointed out that to grow soybeans (one of the sources of biodiesel), a diesel tractor has to make multiple passes over the field, and a lot of fertilizer that is energy-intensive to produce must be used. So at the end of the day, the product does not really help the environment.

It's a different story over here, where the compulsory use of coconut-sourced biodiesel is mandated in a bill filed by Sen. Edgardo Angara in pursuit of the government's goal of energy independence. You don't need diesel tractors or a lot of fertilizer to grow coconuts in a country that is one of the largest exporters of coconut oil in the world. Moreover, there is a market for biodiesel here—nearly all transportation fleets and public utility vehicles plus a good number of SUVs, pickups and minivans are diesel-fed.

Coco-biodiesel

Senate Bill 2184 mandates the preblending of coconut methyl ester (CME) in all diesel used as motor fuel at 1 percent per volume. Angara noted that coco-biodiesel is one of the most promising fuel alternatives in a world gasping for better air quality. Biofuels, he stressed, are reliable, renewable, indigenous and nontoxic and can be produced from any kind of oil including used frying oil, whether vegetable or animal-sourced. The nationwide use of biofuels like coco-diesel would not only generate dollar savings, but also provide a major new market for our agricultural products and thereby expand livelihood opportunities for the Filipino farmers, Angara added.

On the other hand, biodiesel is not really an alternative fuel in the strictest sense of the word because it would be almost impossible to produce enough to supplant petroleum-based diesel fuel. Like ethanol, producing biodiesel in great quantities, even if doable, could drive up food prices. Which brings up the question: which is more important—food or fuel?

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Laughing stock: cattle with a sense of humor.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

Mangled Maharlika Highway; alleluia Alterra

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

I READ IN OUR "LETTERS" SECTION in the Opinion Page last week the angry letter of Doods and Sol Santos, decrying the utter state of disrepair of the Maharlika Highway from Quezon province to Bicolandia. They chastised Representatives Andaya and Tañada for neglecting their sworn duty to ensure a well-paved highway in their districts.

I couldn't agree more with the couple's observation.

I myself witnessed the road conditions between Calauag in Quezon and Del Gallego in Bicol.

I covered said roads last December and to say the roads were bad is an understatement.

* * *

They are not bad—they are "just" the most terrible roads I have ever traversed in any highway in the world.

I wouldn't even call that a highway anymore but an off-road patch fit for hiking and not even for biking.

So mangled are the roads we should stop calling Maharlika Highway Maharlika Highway. What we have over there are not roads but craters and potholes so ugly and deep, respectively, you'd rather that you walk on them than ride even a bike.

* * *

A brand-new automobile could come out of it appearing like a battered 5-year-old—if it should survive the ordeal.

Even the passenger buses had to crawl like snails, gingerly avoiding potholes as big as mouths of volcanoes and as deep as manholes.

The only saving grace for my trip last month to Del Gallego right past the boundary of scenic Tagkawayan, Quezon, was that beach resort off Sta. Rita, whose pristine beauty is perfect for a vacationer looking for calm, peace of mind and tranquility. The company I had was also perfect—Fiscal Joven and Elvie Florido, Judge Morales, Louie Visorde, Judge Go, Franklin Leonor, Tito Laurel, Dante and Ching Fernandez, Rudy and Delia Valena, Ofel J. Magturo and Sol Juvida. Our host, the amiable Fred Ilagan, owns Mila's Lechon, that famous chain of roast-pig restaurants in Manila.

Maraming salamat po uli, Ka Fred!

* * *

The unveiling last month of the new 4x4 Alterra has been met with applause not just from car cognoscenti but also from Isuzu's chief rivals who saw in the new model a sure hit.

While the first Alterra (4x2) was also an instant celebrity, the new 4x4 Alterra has proven to be a bigger hit, what with sales of the new model soaring to unexpected heights during the holiday season.

The new 4x4 Alterra features the convenient Touch-On-The-Fly electronic transfer case to make off-road driving hassle-free. With it, Isuzu customers can have the best of both worlds: the good looks and high-end refinement of a luxury passenger vehicle and the versatility and toughness of a four-wheel-drive sport recreational vehicle.

The 4x4 Alterra is also powered by the 4x2's tried-and-tested 3.0-liter 16-valve DOHC 4JJ-1 I-TEQ diesel engine, which produces 146 ps of horsepower at 3,800 rpm and 30 kg-m of torque from 1,400 to 3,400 rpm. Aside from boasting of a 20 percent improvement in potency compared to common diesel engines, this third-generation common-rail direct-injection diesel engine supplies an incredible 180 megapascals of pressure to its electronically controlled injection nozzles. This translates to a more efficient fuel combustion, which in turn results in better fuel economy and less harmful emissions.

Inside, the 4x4 Alterra boasts of a state-of-the-art entertainment system that consists of a side-disc in-dash DVD/VCD/CD/MP3/WMA player with DTS and Dolby Digital Decoder, 5.1 Channel Digital Surround and 10 speakers with a detachable subwoofer.

What a ride, this new Alterra.

The 4x4 Alterra can be had for P1.589, and the 4x2 from P1.369 to P1.419.

* * *

QUOTE ME. What's the MMDA for if can't make Makati obey its rules, like the color-coding scheme?

* * *

Send comments to menju@pldtdsl.net.

To speak like a child

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

ONE OF THE MOST AMUSING THINGS about childhood is the sense of wonder, the pure unadulterated expression of marvel. The burdens of responsibility and the essential rationalization—the survival tool for human adults—sadly numb this sense of youthful awe and amazement. When all it used to take to wow us was a simple box of chocnut or a hard-fought share of *pabitin* at a children's party, it takes a little bit more to get a rise from most of us these days.

Happy are those who can suspend their cynicism, and spend even just small parts of their daily lives enjoying and experiencing. Being thirty-something, nose deep trying to make ends meet and attempting to survive in the "close quarters battle" workday environs of Manila, one would expect this writer to be one of the more skeptic and foul examples of adult humanity. As evidenced by the apparently contemptuous and seething tone of last week's column, it is possible that I be rightfully described as such.

'Motored medication'

Events that occurred last Friday, worked to defuse the spiraling situation in the same way as chemicals may be used to cure depression. And yes, if you're already guessing that it had something to do with a car, then you know me better than I would publicly profess. The generic name of this automotive antidepressant is 2.0-liter, rear-wheel-drive, five-door hot-hatch with sport package. Those of you who do not speak the *lingua franca* of the automobile will know this particular "motored medication" as the BMW 120i Sport.

Much like the prescription drugs I am referring to, the remedy is nicely packaged, branded well and easy to swallow. Hypoallergenic would also be a good description, as almost anyone can use it—young or old, irregardless of skill level or gumption with the gas pedal. It seems to work better though on the older, jaded types who are seeking better disposition and want to give their drives a workout.

The argument for this generation of Bimmers has been made by many, myself included. The fault with quite a few, even among my more respected and "global" colleagues, is that they've lumped all the current models together as if to come up with some miraculous equation or numerological explanation for the numbers 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 and why they do so well. This generalization is folly, as the 1 Series is a very different automobile from the rest of its propeller-badged brethren.

> The 1 Series is a very different automobile from the rest of its propeller-badged brethren

Potent tool

While the visual esthetic is very similar to most of the rest of the range, the One remains striking because it is a proper hatchback. Read what you will about schools of design, accent lines, allusions to Luftwaffe airships but a five-door hatch says one thing—this car is a potent tool and not just a mode of transportation. Now, what kind of tool this is depends on what your wants and needs are. Imagine the shape of the 1 Series as an inkblot and your eventual answer as insight into your automotive subconscious.

The hatchback format beseeches the question of heat, is this a just a poser or does it have the straight-line punch and handling required of decent speed? The 2.0-liter, inline four is sufficient to propel this heavy-set hatch to decent speed in only a minimal amount of road. Those who will beg to differ must ask themselves if they made full use of the six-speed autobox with +/- shifting. While not as crisp as I'd want it, the shifting is good enough to make use of the engine, all the way to somewhere above 6,000 rpm. Choosing the gears for yourself transforms the 1 Series and is essential to the dynamic nature of this car.

Rewarding experience

The chassis balance and suspension seal the argument in favor of the One. Despite the short wheelbase and the rear-wheel-drive (characteristics that would make a car either fun or dangerous to drive), the almost 50/50 weight distribution allows more experienced drivers to throw the 1 Series about with a lot of pace without any cheek-clenching drama. Bump absorption is rather taught but never harsh, this being the tradeoff for the talented handling. Holding a fast line on an empty flyover is a rewarding experience and one indulgence I will gladly admit to.

I still have a few more days in the BMW 120 Sport and don't really want to think about the time I have to part with it. The grin-inducing nature of this capable little hatchback has to be experienced, if only to confirm what this now glee-ridden hack has to say. Right after e-mailing this to the paper, I'm going to stare at it for a while and take the car out for one more spin. Destination? I do not know and frankly it does not matter—it's all about the drive. And the toothsome smile of the 8-year-old behind the wheel.

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PRA honors top Filipino retailers

THE PHILIPPINE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION (PRA), IN PARTNERSHIP with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), recently honored the country's best homegrown retailers during the 2005 Outstanding Filipino Retailers (OFR) and Shopping Center of the Year Awards Night at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

The highlight of the evening was the awarding of the 1st PRA President's Award to SM Shoemart's Henry Sy as "Father of Philippine Retailing" for his accomplishments and contribution to Philippine retailing and to the country as a whole-creating some 1.5 million jobs, elevating Philippine retailing to world-class standards through his malls, and raising people's aspirations and levels of sophistication abreast with international tastes and standards. The award was presented by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Also given for the first time was the Global Retailer of the Year Award, which was won by Bench for being a local brand that has successfully expanded overseas. Personally receiving the award was Bench chair Ben Chan.

This year's batch of winners is a mix of established and admired brand names in the industry, which have epitomized the model of a successful retailer in terms of growth and good ethical business practices.

Five retailers were elevated to the Hall of Fame this year for winning the award for two consecutive years. They are National Book Store (category killer-durable); Mercury Drug (category killer-consumable); Bayo (fashion category-apparel medium); Folded & Hung (fashion category-apparel small) and Video City (services category).

SM City Baguio bagged the coveted Shopping Center of the Year award with Ayala Center-Greenbelt and Ayala Center-Glorietta as finalists. SM Prime Holdings president Hans Sy received the award on behalf of SM City Baguio.

Named outstanding Filipino retailer (OFR) winners in various categories were: Celine (shoes and bags-medium); Rusty Lopez (shoes and bags-small); Bench Fix Salon (most promising retailer); HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives (specialty category); Abenson (category killer-big ticket); and Shopwise (department store/hypermarket category).

This year's Special Award for regional retailers went to Nepo Mall of Angeles, Pampanga (Regional Shopping Center of the Year Award) and BHF Prime Group Corp of Ilocos Sur.

The OFR'05 finalists were Alteration Plus, Artwork, Astrovision, B Club, ČMG, Fino, Freeway, Oxygen, Maxitoy Lab, Tyler, Candice Megamart, Family Choice Megamart and JTC Mall.

Supported by MasterCard International, PLDT Business Solutions, Philippine Daily Inquirer and Tyco Fire & Security with SM Shoemart, Ayala Center, HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives and Argon Animation Inc as sponsors, this year's event was attended by the Who's Who in Philippine retailing and business-the Sy Family-Mr and Ms Henry Sy, Tessie Sy-Coson, Hans Sy, Herbert Sy, Harley Sy, SM VP-mall operations Annie Garcia, SM SVP-store operations Jorge T. Mendiola; National Book Store founder and 2005 Entrepreneur of the Year winner Socorro Ramos, Mercury Drug president Vivian Que Azcona, PCCI president Donald Dee; Procter & Gamble president Johnip Cua; Cinderella president Edgar Coronel; Ayala Land VP Rowena Tomeldan, Robinsons VP Minda Carpio; HBC chair and CEO Dr. Rosalinda Hortaleza, and MasterCard VP-marketing Judith Marie Dayrit, among others.

ASIAN-AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRANTS SEND 'OPEN LETTER'

Australian Ambassador Tony Hely led the ribbon-cutting ceremonies at the unveiling of 'Open Letter', an exhibition featuring the works of 11 Australian contemporary visual artists reflecting the immigrant experience. Joining him were (from left) Wendy Jeffery, Filipino-Australian artist Vienna Parreno, Metropolitan Museum of Manila director Victorino Manalo, Asia-Australia Arts Centre director and curator Binghui Huangfu, Metropolitan Museum of Manila trustee Victoria Madrigal Vasquez, and Museo Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas curator Regina Cruz. A celebration of the 30th anniversary of Austalia's dialogue partnership with Asean, the exhibition is an 'open letter' from Asian-Australian immigrants formerly from Asean countries, to their country of origin. The exhibition is ongoing at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila until Jan. 13. 'Open Letter' is a project of the Australian Embassy Manila, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Asialink, Gallery 4A and The Metropolitan Museum of Manila.

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CHOWKING IS MARKETING COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Chowking president and CEO Raffy R. dela Rosa (8th from left) stands proud among the winners in the recent 2005 Agora Awards ceremonies held Nov. 10 at the Shangri-La Makati after bagging the much-coveted title Marketing Company of the Year. The 2005 Agora Awards paid tribute to world-class Philippine companies for their marketing excellence. Dela Rosa said the award boosts Chowking's confidence in pursuing its global expansion. Chowking recently set up three stores in Indonesia in addition to its eight stores in the United States and four in the United Arab Emirates. This brings its total store network to 332 around the world. With Dela Rosa are other Agora awardees, PMA president Donald Patrick Lim (7th from left) and award committee heads.

Baguio hosts 'Festival of Minds' conference

THE BAGUIO CITY COUNCIL HAS UNANIMOUSLY PASSED A resolution endorsing the holding of the First International Learning Styles Leadership Conference slated from Jan. 16 to 21 at the Baguio Country Club. Dubbed as the "Festival of Minds", the event will feature 15 world educators who will share their winning strategies on leadership with educators, civil servants, businessmen, NGOs, religious groups and the civic sector. The event has been endorsed by the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. With the dominant theme "Leadership Styles Across Cultures" the ILSC will have two major strands built upon this theme. The first strand slated from Jan. 16 to 18 will focus on "Improving Quality Educational Systems". The second strand set from Jan. 19 to 21 will concentrate on "Championing Change and Innovation for Organizational Effectiveness." For more information, call the Secretariat at the AIM Conference Center in Baguio City at (074) 442-8877 to 78, or (074) 446-9866; 0927-9246932 or 0928-7830096, or e-mail ilsc06@yahoo.com.ph, or log on to www.citsphils.com.

DHL reaffirms commitment to foreign buyers in RP

DHL, THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPRESS and logistics company, has announced its readiness to meet the increasing express and logistical needs of the local garment and general merchandise industries during the 28th founding anniversary celebration of the Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines (Fobap).

DHL Express Philippines country manager Larry Llamzon said, "Fobap's theme of export growth and sustainability in 2006 is very apt, as it conveys a challenge to the Philippine exporting community amidst fierce global market competition in order to achieve its export target of $50 billion for 2006."

"To help these member-companies achieve their growth targets, they need express and logistics services capable of delivering their products to the right place on time. DHL's active role in trade facilitation has led some Fobap member companies to seek more information about our various product and service development initiatives that would help them become globally competitive," Llamzon said.

During the event, Fobap officials lauded exporters whose hard work and dedication enabled the garment industry to maintain its position as the country's second biggest dollar earner. The local garment industry is providing employment and livelihood to an estimated 400,000 workers and staff. Another 30,000 to 50,000 of the labor force from support or service groups indirectly depend on the industry for sources of income.

The celebration coincided with the first year of the garment industry's operation under the quota-free environment. Fobap president Eliseo Miranda said the industry is fast becoming a key driver for the country's economic growth. "There are good indicators which show that we are successful in maintaining, if not slightly increasing, the dollar value of our garment exports. The same indicators also show that we can project or expect the same if not slightly higher dollar exports by next year," Miranda said.

Industry analysts have advised that in order for this upward trend to continue and the industry to remain competitive, various businesses need good express and logistical support for its finished products. DHL was one of the global express and logistics companies mentioned that played a crucial role in fulfilling the global and regional distribution needs of the local garment industry.

ProductFILES

Load up with Thule

NOW THAT SUMMER is just around the corner, Filipinos are looking forward to out-of-town trips with family and friends. While some may opt to go cool their heels on a resort down South or up North, active and sporty individuals usually explore the great outdoors by camping out or trekking. For this reason, Thule provides you with the solution to maximize the load capacity of your car, AUV or SUVs via Thule's line of roof racks and roof boxes. Thule's line of boxes is 100-percent machine made and has passed the four seasons test of the ISO. Thule is also an accredited OEM designer and supplier of load carriers for brands such as Ford, Volvo, Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota, BMW and Mercedes Benz.

All Thule roof racks and boxes are waterproof and theft proof. The aerodynamic design provides a sleek look to the vehicle. Shown is a Ford Explorer with the Thule Roof Box. For more information on how to gear up and make your vacation a more adventurous one, load up and visit the Thule-EGR showrooms in Ortigas Avenue with telephone numbers 744-6367, and Pasong Tamo with telephone numbers 892-7847. Log on to www.thule.com.

Bread made the 'traditional' way

WHILE TRENDS COME AND GO, true value will stay. Uncle George Gourmet Breads may have been around only for about a year, but it's backed up with more than a decade of passion in baking. All Uncle George Gourmet Breads are made daily in the old traditional way. The term "traditional" simply means that only few automated processes are used, relying instead on time-honored methods of hand-molding each individual loaf and using long fermentation to develop the full flavor of the dough. Starter dough is used in replacement of artificial enhancers and preservatives. Salt, sugar and fat are used judiciously. These breads are made the way it should always be and it also makes an important contribution to a healthy diet. Uncle George Gourmet Breads are definitely good for you!

Uncle George Gourmet Bread varieties include: High Fiber category, Low Sugar, No Sugar or Sugar Free category, Low Fat, other sweet and savory bread and pastries. Some of which are Whole Wheat Bread, Oatmeal Multigrain Loaf, Walnut Cinnamon Ring, Mutigrain Wholewheat Loaf, Hershey's Monkey Bread, Apple Raisin Prosperity Ring, Stollen Bread, and Ensaymadas with Ham. All Gourmet Bread product shelf life is four days. Uncle George Gourmet Bread products are available in Greenhills and weekend markets. You can also order at least two days in advance for delivery. Call Uncle George Gourmet Bread at 374-4731.

Bits Clips

e-LGU web winners

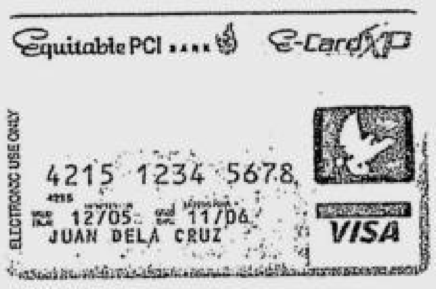
THE NATIONAL COMPUTER CENTER has announced the winners in its Local Government Unit (LGU) Website Contest. Launched in partnership with the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communications (AIJC), the website contest was part of NCC's flagship project "Jumpstarting Electronic Governance in Local Government Units" or the eLGU Project. The contest aimed to encourage LGUs to establish and maintain an official site in the World Wide Web and facilitate improved delivery of online services to the public. Winning LGUs were the Province of Bulacan, Naga City of Camarines Sur, the Municipality of Trinidad, Bohol and the Municipality of Pateros, Metro Manila. For details, log on to www.ncc.gov.ph and AIJC at www.asianjournalism.com.ph.

Fape conducts ICT seminar

FUND ASSISTANCE TO PRIVATE EDUCATION (Fape), an organization that aims to improve the quality of teaching in higher education, will conduct a series of talks on information and communications technology (ICT) among administrators. Diwa Learning Systems' vice president Jose Maria Policarpio is scheduled to speak. The talk is part of Fape's Inset, or In Service Training for Effective Principalship. It is an annual upgrading program for participating institutions designed by Fape and funded by the Department of Education. The Fape talks are scheduled on Jan. 13 in Butuan City, Jan. 20 in Cagayan de Oro City, Jan. 27 and Feb. 10 in Fape Conference Center, Makati, Feb. 17 in Bacolod City, Feb. 24 in Tacloban City and March 3 in Puerto Princesa. For more information, call Diwa Learning Systems at 817-8700.

Ayurveda therapy lectures

A.R.E. AND THE SERENITY Healing Center invites you to free lectures on healthcare. Lectures start at 6:30 p.m. The center is at 5B Gen. Capinpin Street, Antonio Village, Pasig. Call Cecille or Miles at 634-5058 to confirm attendance. On Jan. 12: Ayurveda; the all-natural holistic healthcare program. Dr. Jacob Gnalian of the Missionaries of the Far East and the Sandhi Ayurveda Clinic in Mandaluyong will lecture on Ayurveda, the world's oldest form of healthcare. On Jan. 19: Rohun Therapy; finding the music of the soul. Lawyer Gigi Garcia will discuss Rohun, a process of transformation that systematically enlightens one's thoughts and feelings to connect one more deeply with one's Higher self.



Visa launches the unembossed Visa card

Visa has introduced the unembossed Visa cards to the Philippines, which will provide better protection to cardholders while they enjoy access to millions of merchant locations worldwide.

The main difference between the unembossed Visa card and other Visa cards is that the cardholder information is printed, not embossed or raised, on the card surface. It is meant for "Electronic Use Only", as indicated on the face of the card, and cannot be used for transactions that use a card imprint ('zip-zap' machines). This provides cardholders additional security and protection because online payment terminals can instantly request issuer authorization.

The unembossed Visa card is available as debit, prepaid, and credit cards. Debit cards allow cardholders to pay by accessing their savings or current account. Prepaid cards have stored value and offer a simple, secure, and economical alternative for making payments.

A recent member to the family of unembossed cards is Equitable Card-Network (ECN), which has launched the unembossed Visa prepaid and debit cards to the Philippine market.

The unembossed Visa card provides cardholders with access to over 24 million merchant locations and ATMs worldwide, making shopping, dining, and other leisure activities more convenient. It can be used at all Visa merchants with electronic terminals.

Transactions using the unembossed Visa cards will be processed in the same manner as other Visa cards, ensuring the same convenience and security. Cardholders must verify their identity by signing a receipt.

"As the world's leading payment card association, Visa is dedicated to creating payment solutions that offer unparalleled convenience, security, and acceptance", said Visa International Country Manager for the Philippines James Dixon. "The unembossed Visa card is a product that will enable as many people as possible to experience the benefits of electronic payments in the Philippine market", added Mr. Dixon.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

RP exports dropped by 1.6% in Nov. 2005

Nov. receipts slipped to $3.63B from $3.68B in Nov. '04

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S EXPORTS FELL by 1.6 percent in November last year because of the sluggish demand for electronics, making officials concede that the 10-percent export growth target for 2005 would not be achieved.

Data from the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that exports in November stood at only $3.626 billion, lower than the $3.685 billion recorded during the same month in 2004.

The November exports data brought the cumulative 11-month figure to $37.39 billion, a measly 2.7-percent growth from the $36.403 billion recorded during the same period in 2004.

"By this time, we should no longer think of 2005, but instead focus on 2006," said Dennis Arroyo, director of the policy and planning division of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

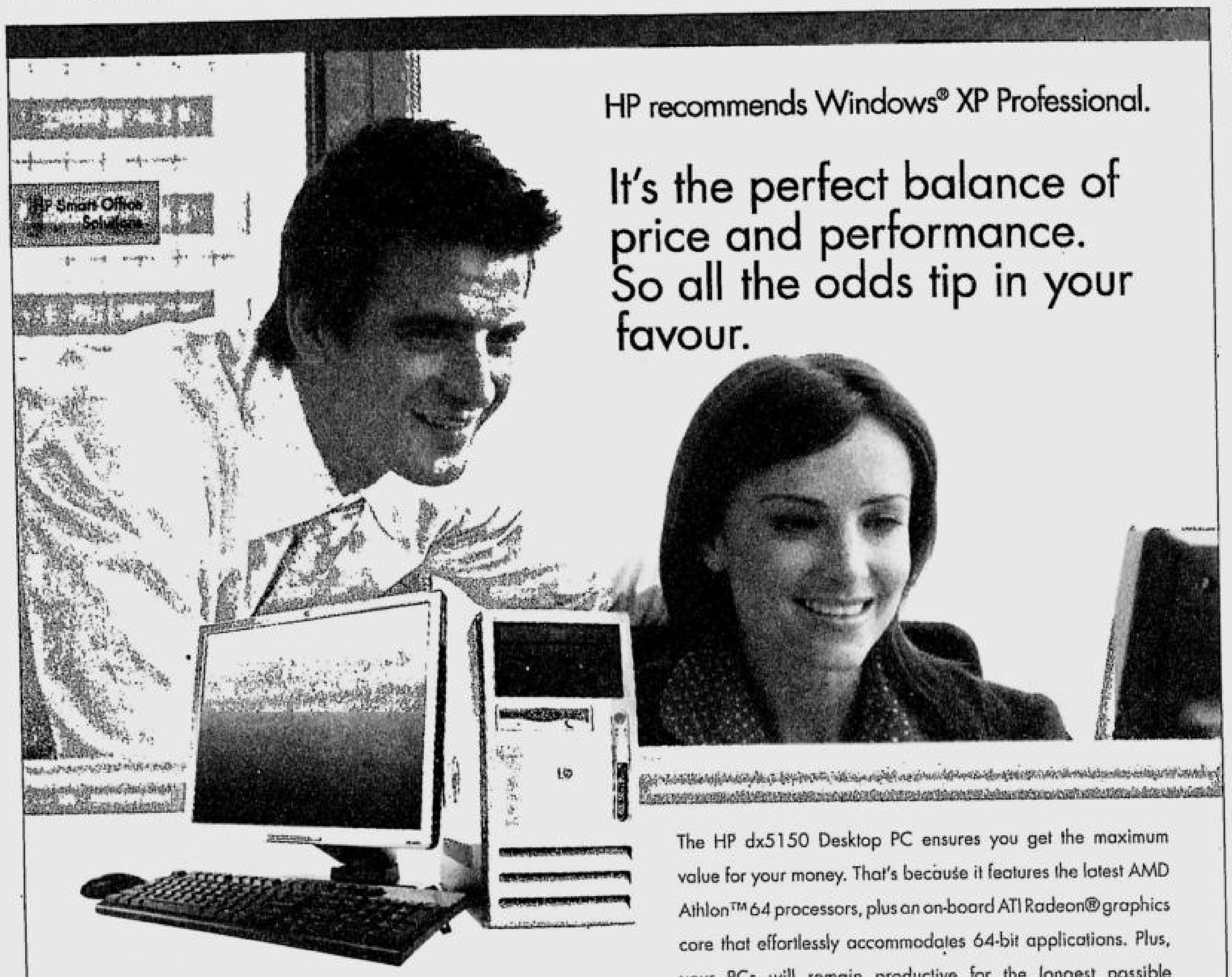
Arroyo said the government would keep its 10-percent growth target for 2006.

NSO data showed that the export of electronics, the country's major export product that accounts for about 70 percent of the total receipts, dropped 1.3 percent in November to $2.468 billion.

Arroyo said the Philippines should promote its exports of agricultural and mining products to compensate for the dismal demand for electronics.

He added that the Philippines should take advantage of the bird flu scare, originating from Indonesia and China, by exporting more poultry products.

The NSO data showed that aside from electronics, garments exports also dropped in November. Garments is the country's second top export, accounting for $166.15 million, or 4.6 percent, of the total export receipt.



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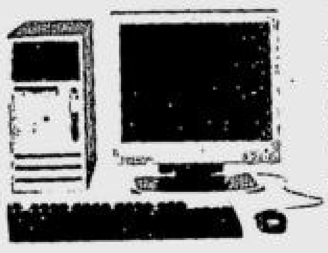

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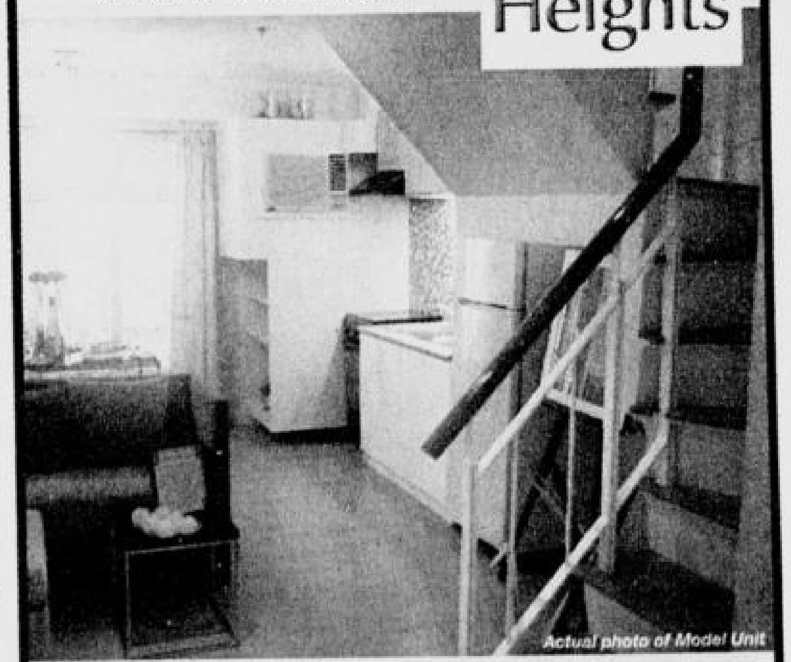

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GlobeQUEST VPN Express initiates IPSec tunneling and encryption to enable a site office of the customer network to be virtually connected to its headquarters and other branches.

IPSec is a protocol which sits on top of the Internet Protocol (IP) layer and ensures enhanced Internet security and privacy of data, thereby preventing unauthorized persons from accessing the information being received and sent.

In addition, the IPSec-based GlobeQUEST VPN Express integrates and supports multiple technologies and access methods that allow companies to build on their existing network and continue to run business applications whether voice, data or video over a wide area.

Thus, clients can realize significant savings on operational expenses through innovative design and approach to private networking.

The service is, likewise, easily scalable, customizable and flexible to meet the clients' growing needs and is fully-integrated with GlobeQUEST's private data network services such as MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) which can be used to aggregate traffic to the head office.

GlobeQUEST VPN Express offers variants that are tailor-fit to customer networking requirements and provides the clients with an "always on" connectivity to ensure real time information availability from its geographically dispersed branches or location.

Real-time connectivity enables customer to have updated information from dispersed location. This translates into faster decision making, better monitoring and improve market response

It is available anywhere anyone can get an Internet connection whether in the Philippines or abroad and can be accessed through foreign partner service providers or aggregators.

It also provides end-to-end management for proactive monitoring of customer network as well as value-added features such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Managed Security.

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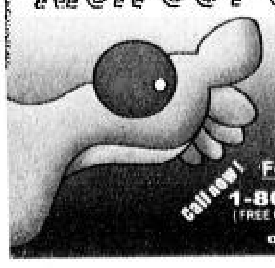

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Chocoholics, unite!

Make Willy Wonka proud and have your chocolate fix

By Irene C. Perez
Photos by Roselle Aguilar

CHOCOLATE IS THE GOOD girl's drug. A happy pill in a bar, it makes us forget stressful routines, lousy partners and the deadliest of deadlines. Chocolate makes us feel so good that we sometimes think it should be regulated.

Aside from giving us an ecstatic feeling which is better than seeing that guy we've been stalking for months, these sweet li'l treats may be sort of aphrodisiacs—and we don't mean the kinky stuff here.

How?

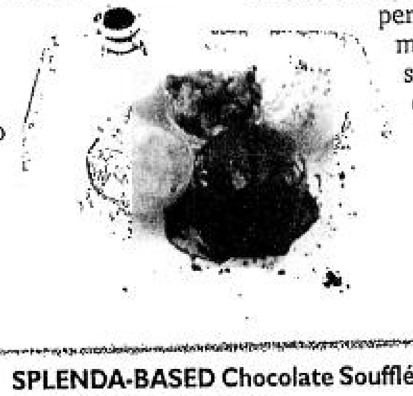
Chocs release chemicals like *phenylethylamine* (also called "love drug") in the brain that make us giddy and cause a similar feeling of being in love. Chocs also give off endorphins which lessen pain and ward off depression, giving us that sugar-high.

We know how much you love chocolates so release your inner chocoholic and check out this review of the most sinful, richest chocolate desserts.

Max Brenner

Ground level, Greenbelt 3

If there's a man who knows what chocolate is all about, it is the bald man from Israel, Max Brenner. The Max Brenner Chocolate Bar is heaven-on-earth for chocoholics. In fact, most diners even order chocolate desserts with chocolate drinks.



SPLENDA-BASED Chocolate Soufflé Cake. No flour, no sugar!

Their biggest seller is the Splenda-Based Chocolate Soufflé Cake—a sugar-free (hooray!) choco soufflé cake with vanilla sauce, a scoop of Häagen-Dazs vanilla ice cream, topped with chocolate shaving. Most desserts at Max's are served with a "chaser" of fruits in syrup and candied walnut.

Another hot item is the Mud Max, a light chocolate cake with caramel nougatine, served with chocolate sauce and Häagen-Dazs strawberry ice cream. Then there's Climax, a multilayered cake with strawberry coulis and crème anglaise.

Choco-meter: Chocoholics might foam in the mouth upon entering Max Brenner because there is chocolate everywhere! It's the nearest thing to Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, but you'll get bald hotties as servers instead of Oompa-Loompas.

It is refreshing to have a sugarless Soufflé Cake that's light in texture, with just the right sweetness. The strawberry ice cream in Mud Max balances out the choco overload, and Climax could very well be the high point of your Max Brenner experience.

But go easy. Max Brenner products are quite steep-priced so be careful not to max out that credit card. Max also offers products to go, all sourced from the main Israel branch, such as Addiction (a metallic box filled with small chocolate cubes), Cubes (pralines with filling), Chicao (chocolates with gourd or bitter roasted cocoa beans), Theo (choco-coated coffee beans), and Rocher (choco-coated mashed hazelnut rolled in almonds) to name some.

Bubba Gump

2/L, Greenbelt 3

Forrest Gump says: "Momma always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." We say: Have an Alabama Mud Pie, you'll never know how much chocolate you can get.

Bubba Gump's Alabama Mud Pie is the perennial dieter's nightmare—a thick, six-inch-high slice of ice-cream cake made of layers of chocolate and vanilla ice cream, with chunks of Snickers bar and ribbons of caramel served on a bed of choco syrup, and topped with whipped cream and crunchy peanuts.

For a romantic dessert, there's the Chocolate Chip Cookie Sundae. Best shared, this one has a giant freshly baked chocolate cookie served with vanilla ice cream, topped with chocolate and caramel sauce, peanuts and whipped cream. It is a "date dessert" but the

CHOCOHOLICS/C2

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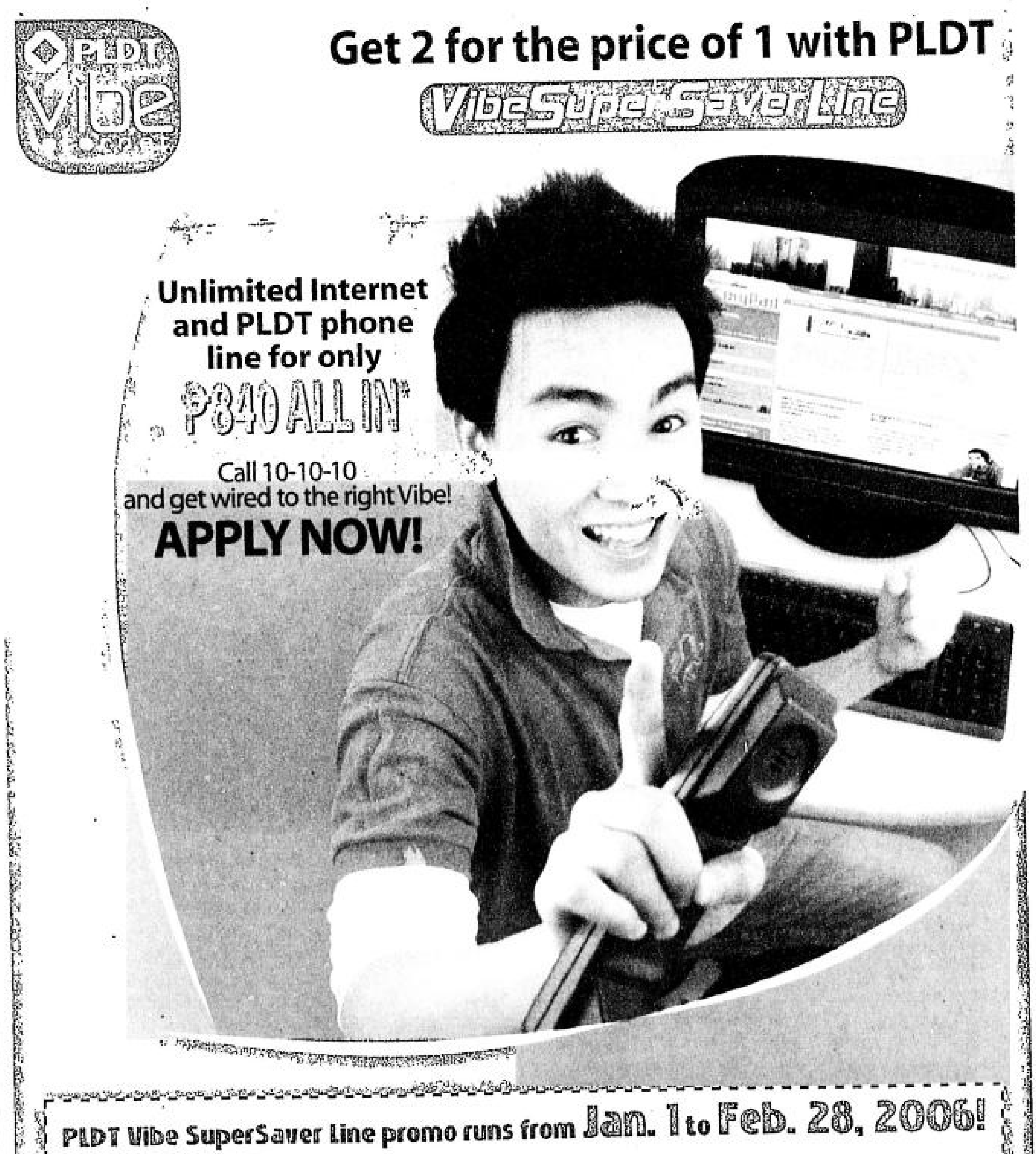

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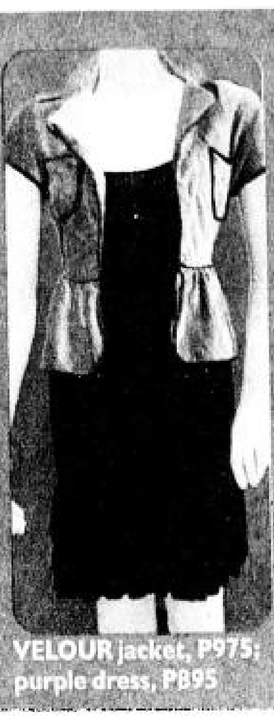
VELOUR jacket, P975; purple dress, P895

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Fun, funky and fabulous

PINK printed trench coat, P1,795

PHOTOS BY ROGER CARPIO

WHITE jacket, P895; black sequined top, P475

By Pam Pastor

EVEN BRANDS GET MAKEOVERS. And 2006 promises to bring you a Freeway that you've never seen before.

The brand starts the year right by presenting a new collection that's sure to get you itching to shop. They offer clothes in various textures—from velour and suede to knits and brocades—for these colder days, sexy tops and a number of other unique pieces. And it doesn't stop there. Their in-house designers have been working extra hard at creating even more pieces that you would want to add to your wardrobe.

"The new pieces are very international in terms of trends," says Sheree Gotauco, Freeway's owner. "We are updated on what's happening in the US and Europe when it comes to fashion. If it's available from foreign labels, it's going to be available here at less than half the price."

With new items arriving in the stores every week, Freeway can quench your shopping thirst regularly with hot new looks.

The Fashion Freaks got a preview of just how hot these looks are during one afternoon spent playing with mannequins at Freeway's Glorietta branch.

A lot of changes are in store for Freeway this coming year but we're pleased that some things will remain the same—like affordability and value for money.

Freeway has 30 branches nationwide. Check it out at your favorite malls.

Freeway will be giving away P2,000 worth of gift certificates to a lucky 2bU! reader. If you want to join this contest, all you have to do is choose your favorite outfit from our Freeway spread and tell us where you would wear it. E-mail us at contest2bu@inquirer.com.ph. Don't forget to include your name, age, office/school and contact info.

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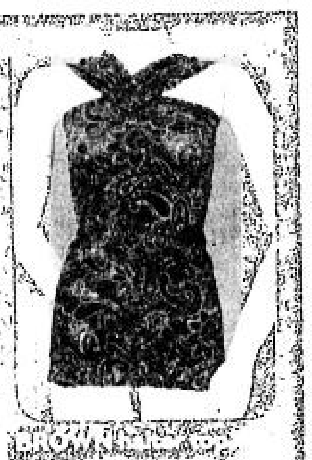
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Chocoholics, unite!

From page C1

chocoholic in you would want to eat this one alone.

Choco-meter: Believe us when we say that the Alabama Mud Pie is big. Make room for dessert because this could fill you up full. If you're looking for that sugar high and brain freeze, go for the Pie. For lighter dessert, go for the Chip which tastes like warm chewy brownie, perfect with the vanilla ice cream.

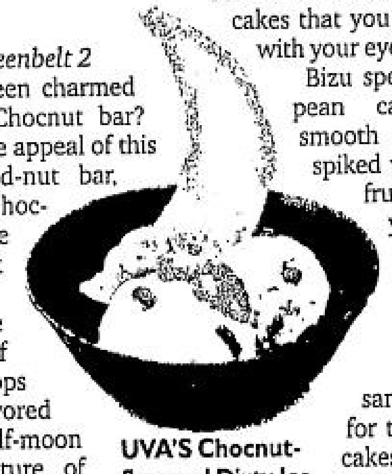
Uva

Ground level, Greenbelt 2

Who hasn't been charmed by the classic Chocnut bar? Uva, knowing the appeal of this li'l chocolate-and-nut bar, has concocted Chocnut-inspired ice cream. Think posh *sorbetes*.

Uva's Dirty Ice Cream consists of three large scoops of Chocnut-flavored gelato with a half-moon cookie the texture of sweet ice cream cone. You can order this baby by the gallon, just make sure to call in advance if you want more.

Choco-meter: Ice cream junkies will love this. The gelato is smooth and rich, and each serving is good for sharing (but if you manage to wolf down all three scoops, you can always ask for another one). We love the half-moon cookie; it's very much like the local cone the *mamang sorbetero* serves his funky colored *sorbetes* in.


UVA'S Chocnut-flavored Dirty Ice Cream

Bizu Patisserie

Ground level, Greenbelt 2

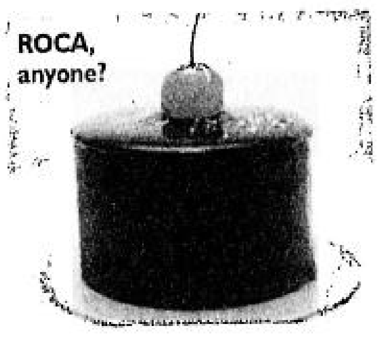
Enter the pink-and-purple premises of Bizu and you'll find rows and rows of mouth-watering cakes that you can almost taste with your eyes.

Bizu specializes in European cakes made of smooth basic mousse spiked with nuts, cream, fruits and other yummy add-ons. The cakes come in three sizes: personal, midi and grande.

If you want to sample all cakes, go for their personal-size cakes. There's Samba, for instance, a mix of milk and dark chocolate mousse between layers of chocolate cake, coated with homemade chocolate sauce.

If you're in for a death-by-chocolate experience, try Roca, the chocolatiest of Bizu's cakes. It has tempting layers of caramel and Madagascar vanilla custard surrounded by dark chocolate ganache, topped with a chocolate glaze and almond praline sprinkle.

EXPERIENCE Nirvana at Bizu


ROCA, anyone?

For a diet dessert, try out Jolie, a flourless and sugarless Kahlua mousse cake with hazelnuts and chiboust cream. Now you can have your cake and eat it, too. And you guessed it, Jolie is named after Hollywood hottie Angelina Jolie.

Choco-meter: Samba is rich, soft and smooth. Best paired with coffee, this one will delight most dessert lovers. For the hardcore choco freaks, Roca is a velvety, silky pastry, a to-die-for treat.

Best surprise is Jolie. This cake is something South Beach dieters and low-carb lovers will worship.

MAGNUM'S Flourless Chocolate Ganache Cake

Cibo

2/L, Glorietta 3

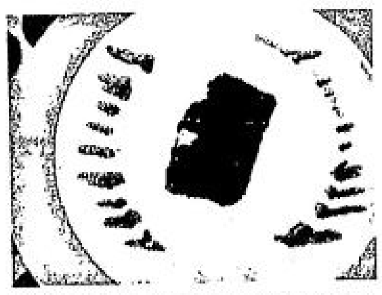
Say Cibo, and you'll think of fun polka-dots on an orange background. That, and their heavenly Tiramisu.

Dessert freaks visit this Italian resto for their Tiramisu Su Croccante, Cibo's version of the classic dessert. It has layers of cream mixture and flaky, crunchy pastry reminiscent of homegrown *otap*.

L'ottimo, on the other hand, is chocolate fudge cake done the Cibo way. It is a flourless, pure chocolate cake served on a bed of cream and drizzled with chocolate syrup.

Choco-meter: Cibo's Tiramisu is the creamiest, richest we've ever tasted. It's something not even your mom's homemade *tiramisu* can top.

Their L'ottimo is a small slice of choco goodness, a simple dessert for those who want their sweets plain.


L'OTTIMO, chocolate fudge cake done the Cibo way

Magnum

Ground level, Greenbelt 3

Flourless seems to be the fad in chocolate cakes nowadays. Is this because of the low-carb diet craze? Maybe. And not to be left behind is Magnum. They have the Flourless Chocolate Ganache Cake served with strips of mangoes and a scoop of cookies-and-cream ice cream on a bed of rich, chocolate syrup.

Choco-meter: This one's just right for those who want their cake a little less on the sweet side. The ganache cake is slightly rough in texture, and is best for those who want their cake gritty. And oh, Magnum changes menus quarterly so better check this one out quick.

E-mail the author at iperez@inquirer.com.ph

Life, learning and basketball

The And 1 Mix Tape Tour awed those who went to the Araneta Coliseum to watch the players live

By Dexter R. Matilla
Contributor

FOR SOME TIME NOW, the And 1 Mix Tape Tour has been going all over the world and spreading the good news about basketball, teaching, molding and transforming the game we've all grown to love.

End result? Some unforgettable memories are made whichever court they step on.

The And 1 Mix Tape Tour continues to grow. True ballers of all ages collect DVDs of the Mix Tapes, trying to learn the skills of their favorite And 1 players and at the same time, creating their own.

For the second straight year, through the efforts of Relzbach Ventures, the And 1 Mix Tape Tour brought its wares to Philippine soil and awed those who went to the Araneta Coliseum to watch the players live.

Not that the final score was really important. And 1 cruised to a lopsided victory. Anthony "Half-Man, Half-Amazing" Heyward, however, praised the Filipino players who passed the open run and faced the And 1 players.

"They didn't quit. They didn't stop playing. The fans would have noticed it and that would be it," Heyward said.

Heyward came to the country along with Robert "50" Martin, Tony "Go Get It" Jones, Waliyy "Main Event" Dixon, Jamar "Pharmacist" Davis, Lonnie "Prime Objective Harrell, the "Professor" Grayson Scott Butcher, and Dennis "Spyda" Chism.

"High Octane" came with the And 1 delegation but had to go ahead to Australia due to back pains. Also, among those who came were And 1 public relations director Mandy Murphy, former Philippine Basketball Association Shell import Steve Burtt, and the tour's official court emcee Duke Tango.

Baller-teacher

But among the players who came, it was Heyward who had a story to tell. The man more popular as "Half-Man, Half-Amazing" definitely lived up to his moniker on and off the court.

Before he became "Half-Man, Half-Amazing," Heyward was a teacher. For nine years, the 6'6" Heyward was teaching in Brooklyn New York. He recalled being introduced to the And 1 style of play six years ago by Waliyy "Main Event" Dixon.

"Since then, I've been a part of the team," he said.

Of course, teaching still meant a lot to him. There were times he couldn't join the And 1 tour because he was teaching full-time for 10 months.

"I would just join them when school was out," he said.

His discipline defines Heyward's personality as a basketball player and as a teacher. Sometimes, his two personas mix. During half-time in the Araneta game, Heyward and his And 1 teammates threw freebies at the audience. As Heyward was standing under the basket, waiting for his cue, someone from the crowd crept up behind him and stole the miniature ball he was holding.

Slowly, with a stern look on his face, Heyward made his way to where the unruly person was and without saying a word, asked for the ball back.

"I wanted that guy to realize that it was not the right thing to do," Heyward explained. "I guess the teacher in me just came out at that moment."

ANTHONY Heyward entertains a kid at a local orphanage.

Lessons

The day of their flight to the tour's next stop, Australia, the And 1 delegation paid a visit to an orphanage.

"It felt really good being there," Heyward said. "I've been dealing with kids all my life and it's a truly wonderful experience to be able to reach out to them and see the smiles in their faces."

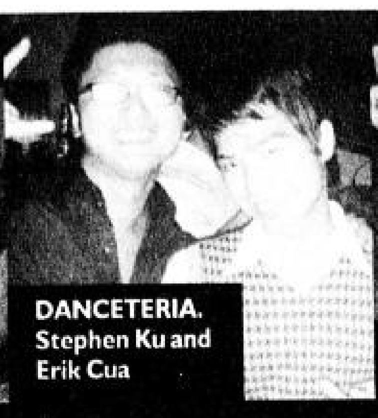
Before leaving, I asked Heyward if there were any similarities between playing basketball and teaching.

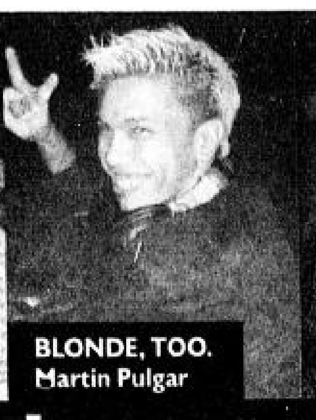
"When you step into the court, if you pay attention to a good basketball player, you'll learn new things, skills, tricks. If you step into the classroom and pay attention to the teacher, you'll also learn new stuff," he said.

What's the best lesson he has learned as a person, a teacher and as a basketball player? "Never stop believing in yourself. You always learn something new everyday until the day you die, so never back down from challenges."

HALE to Champ Lui Pio and Pia Campos

NEW SUN. Owens Sun and Ivan Zalameda


DANCETERIA. Stephen Ku and Erik Cua


BLONDE, TOO. Martin Pulgar

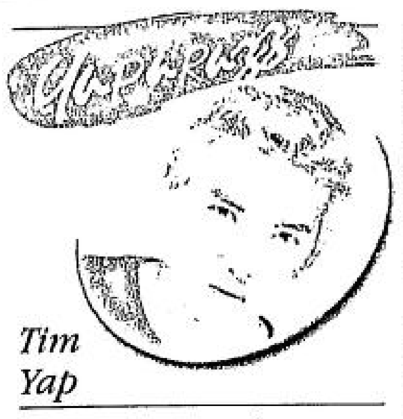
MOTO WINNER. Maritess Connell with Mari Litonjua

NEW YOU'S. Nikki Martel, Alex de Leon and Gino Khury

Happy you year!

Sometimes we have to decide between what is right and what is easy

PHOTOS BY TIM YAP


Tim Yap

IT WAS MY FIRST TIME IN many years to have stayed in Manila for the holidays. I had been traveling quite a lot this past year and wanted to stay put, for once.

The past few years, I have found solace in spending my time waiting for the first sunrise of the year in the shores of Boracay. I know a lot of people are still "stranded" on the island as we speak. Don't worry, for I shall follow in due time.

I made sure to stay in my hometown called Embassy to witness the countdown to 2006. It was to be held at the club, but at 11 p.m., I thought of my puppy Super and realized that the fireworks made her shiver. I didn't want her to be alone, so, like a guilty parent who showers his kids with gifts, I chose to spend the year's turning point in her company.

I brought her to my dressing room and turned the air-con up so she would not hear the firecrackers. My flat is sandwiched between Greenhills and Wack Wack, so you can just imagine the pomp and pageantry of the lights in the sky. It was World Pyro Olympics all over again. Okay, maybe just Inter-village Pyro fest.

Jam-packed

There were over 20 New Year's happenings all over the city. Mezze had their M list party, Luce had Cosmo editor **Ianne Evangelista** spinning with the scene's hottest DJs, Fiamma and Citrus had their own parties as well. Every place was packed. I left Embassy to head over to an after-party at 6 a.m. and there was still a line outside! (And lines inside, too.)

The hands down winners of the night were the **Cadness** sisters and company, who were all decked out as "washed-out disco queens" in full regalia, boas, net stockings and attitude galore. **Ornusa**, the scene's "Anti-It" chick, wore a shirt that she painted with the words "We are getting older." Speak for yourself, girl.

We're all getting older
WELCOME 2006! With Ornusa and Dara Cadness

I know of some parents who went home at 8 a.m. after partying on New Year's Day, woke up their kids, and cooked breakfast for them, too! Now how's that for smart parenting? But that's for another section of this paper.

At Embassy Cuisine, I spotted these two blonde Russian chicks by the bar and offered them some drinks. (I really have an affinity with blonde Russians.) Later, I took them to the VIP room where we had more drinks. Then we went dirty dancing, and one of them said, "Let's go to your flat," while grabbing my crotch.

Okay, before this gets erotic (we are a child-friendly newspaper after all), I had to run to the bar and get more drinks—for myself. I've never been harassed really. I'm always the predator, never the prey. Oh, well, everything happens at least once. What a way to start the year.

Perfect setting

The midnight before that, I made sure everything would fall right into place. To start my year in a perfectly chillaxed setting, I lit my Cereo candles and filled the room with a lemongrass scent, made a L'Occitane bubble bath of creamy foam and lathered myself with soap. And then I soaked myself in the tub, rested my head and sniffed the air. It smelled of... dog poop.

When I looked around, true enough the culprit was my cute little monster, smiling with her head down, knowing she had just done something naughty. I couldn't get mad at her because she did the right thing, just at the wrong time. Plus, she was too cute in her **Kate Torralba** outfit. I just picked up her droppings and flushed them down the toilet. Shit happens but, oh well, that's love.

Speaking of love, it was quite easy to fall under Cupid's spell this past holiday season. Even if there were no mistletoes around, people were just in a jolly and festive mood to fall in love, lust or whatever.

We just have to make sure it's really Cupid, and not Bacchus, who shoots the arrow (Ouch!). It might just be the champagne. Or the gin... *bulag*. Or the *lechon*. Or whatever.

It is so easy to fall in love. Who doesn't want to? But sometimes we have to make a decision between what is right and what is easy. Restraint can sometimes play devil's advocate. Even when we just want to indulge, the devil can become our angel, guarding us against possible danger.

New start or not, we still have to do things, make little reality checks no matter how much we like to romanticize things.

For now, I have a puppy to take care of, and some more poop to pick up. Have a great year ahead, dear partyphiles.

Photos light up Le Soufflé

RAOUL SOLIVEN'S PHOTOgraphic exhibit, "Drawn to the Light," opens tonight, at Le Soufflé-Amorsolo Tower in Rockwell Center, Makati City.

Thirty-five 11x14, 12x18 and 18 x 24-inch prints are a computer-enhanced photo essay focusing on light's relation to life.

"Light creates life," said the artist. "Life has color, but at times it's black and white and gray. It's blurry, it's sharp, it's vivid, it's exciting."

"'Drawn to the Light' is what happens in photography," Soliven said. "You look for light, and then when you see it, you hold onto it. It's a lot like what I've been through. It was very dark for quite a time, but the 'light of the world' showed up, and I've been holding on to Him ever since."

Soliven, a US-trained photographer, said he wishes to start the New Year with hope. Even if things look bleak and dismal?

"Well," said the photographer-preacher, "light always drives away darkness. Look for the light. When you see it, draw near to it. And life will start getting better."

The show will run until Feb. 9.

Back to basics, girls

From page C4

my hair did look like it was all mine. It was smooth, sleek, modern and didn't need a blow-dry to style.

The hair manicure was the perfect treatment, not only restoring my hair's softness and health, but also leaving it looking shinier than it had been in a long time. It's notches higher than your usual color rinse or shine treatment, because it doesn't only coat your strands, but infuses hair with nutrients so it brings back health and shine from within.

Obagi is available at Belo Medical Group clinics in Westgate Alabang, Medical Plaza Makati, Rustan's Makati, Tomas Morato, Greenhills, and Tektite-Ortigas, 7247443/7246626 (Greenhills) and 8177178/8179283(Medical Plaza); Basement Salon at Rockwell Powerplant, 8982033; You Salon at the Fort Strip, 8184968/8181968.

E-mail the author at lora_gahol@yahoo.com

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Back to basics, girls

The fundamentals can make all the difference in how you look and feel

Lora Gabol

I DID NOT MAKE ANY RESOLUTIONS this year. No "I will really, really start going to the gym" or "I will cut down on my sugar intake" promises.

I made one major decision that I know I will stick to, though. I will start to really take care of myself, not by going on a cosmetics shopping spree or a chocolate binge, but by focusing on the basics: my skin and hair.

Surprisingly enough, I discovered that putting the fundamentals in the spotlight can actually make all the difference in how I look and feel. Cases in point? Read on.

Complexion cure-all

I cannot stop raving to anybody who would care to listen about how the well-talked about Obagi Nu-Derm System is the best thing that has ever happened to my skin.

Upon hearing fab reviews from fellow INQUIRER columnist Kinny Salas, who has tried Obagi under the expertise of the Belo Medical Group, I threw my initial apprehensions out the window and started my own "transformation" immediately.

At Belo, my derma Dr. Múñoz created the most precise regimen (down to the last gram) to target my major skin problems: occasional breakouts and stubborn acne scars. There went my impression that Obagi was just for women battling wrinkles and aging. Its wide range of products and flexibility make it ideal for women with different skin concerns ranging from acne, malasma, aging, and every blemish and crow's foot in between.

Coming from a beach trip that left my complexion uneven and spotty (with a couple of bad zits, no less), I had very conservative expectations as far as results were concerned. But five weeks into treatment, I almost forget how bad my skin was pre-Obagi!

I wake up in the morning with the freshest, smoothest, rosiest skin, and I'm not even done with my first set! Over the holidays and through three family reunions, I've gotten way too many comments on how great my skin looked, I hardly needed presents to feel the spirit of giving.

One *tita* even asked, "What foundation are you using? *Ganda*, ah!," when I wasn't wearing any! And, during a post-Christmas visit to my former office, a couple of girls remarked that I looked "soooo made-up" when all I had on was lip balm. I almost felt as flawless as Claudine Barretto! Well, maybe not yet, but we'll see after a couple more weeks. With Obagi, I just know it's possible.

For a blow-by-blow account of my Obagi experience, watch out for my Obagi Diary. I'll be doing a week-by-week account of my skin's reaction, improvement and transformation. In the meantime, it wouldn't hurt to visit a Belo Clinic to have a skin diagnosis and see what this amazing system can do for you. The price you'll be paying is well-worth every cent. I have my face to prove it.

Happy new hair

When I started getting bored with my faux long hair (by Bergmann Hair Systems, who magically transformed my chin-length mane into nearly Rapunzel locks), I knew I had to visit a salon to give it a professional boost.

I headed off to Basement Salon, booked an appointment with Joseph Tabile (who does practically every girl I know who has great hair) for the natural, low-maintenance color he is known for. Instead of a full head of color, he suggested highlights that will make the most of the natural color I have. This, he said, would also do minimal damage to my "re-virginized" hair. And, being the salon sloth that I am, I rejoiced at the prospect that there would be virtually no visible roots as my hair grew.

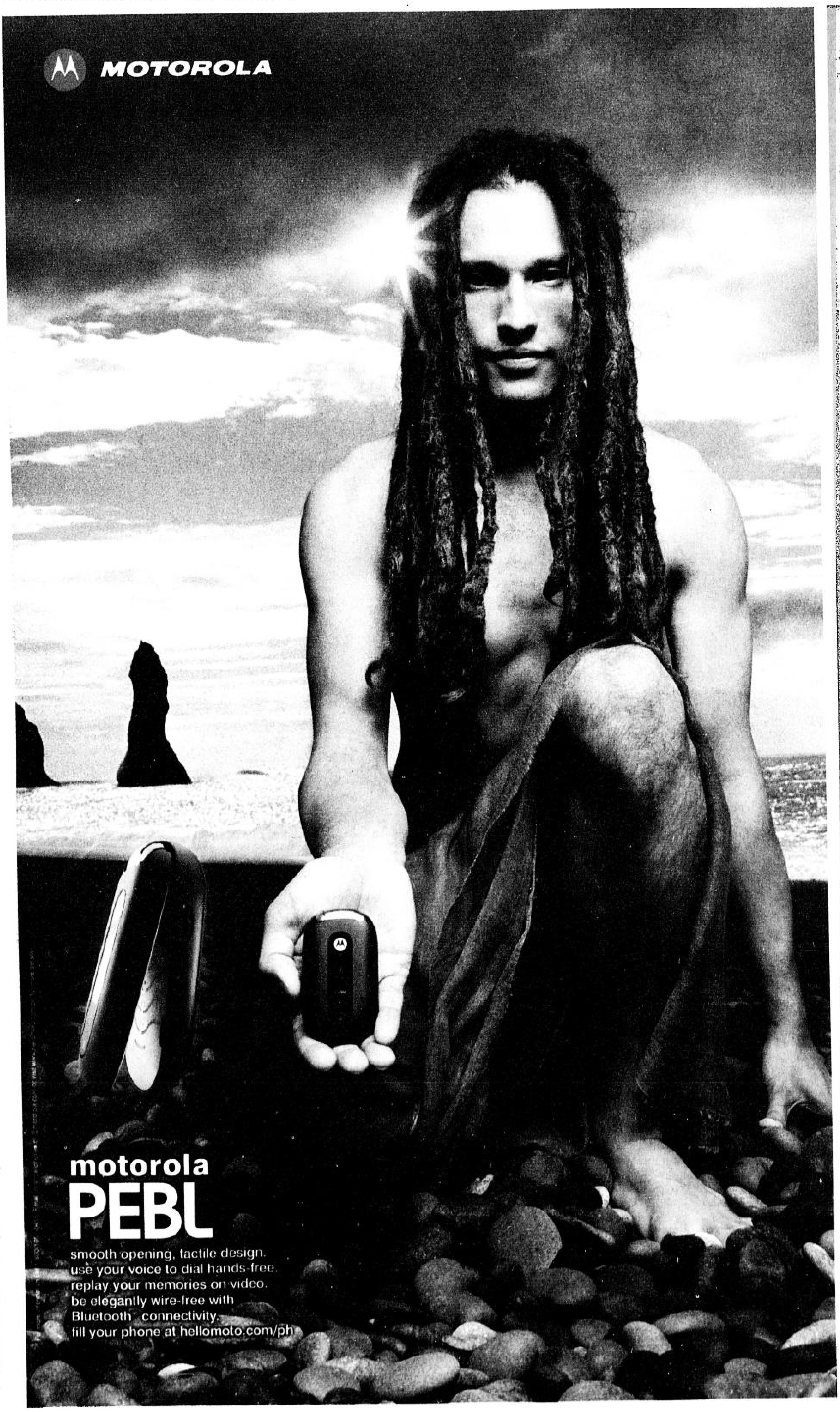
After Joseph used a mix of six different colors (no platinum blondes and fiery reds, I should add), I was relieved to see that there were no "painted-on" streaks on my head. Instead, I had a beautiful medley of perfectly blended color, making my hair look much healthier (the vibrance of the color did it).

I then got the most generous invitation from new salon on the block, You Salon at the Fort. Not only did I get to try a state-of-the-art treatment no other salon offered, I got to meet one of the geniuses behind the salon as well.

Before my hair manicure, I was treated to a cut by creative director Mr. YS, who hardly spoke any English yet managed to communicate that my real hair wasn't cut right to accommodate my extensions. Meaning, he was going to cut it in a way that would make them blend into my real hair as naturally as possible.

After countless snips using different pairs of shears and razors (he says he uses many tools to achieve the most precise results), I was delighted to see that, in fact,

BACK/C3



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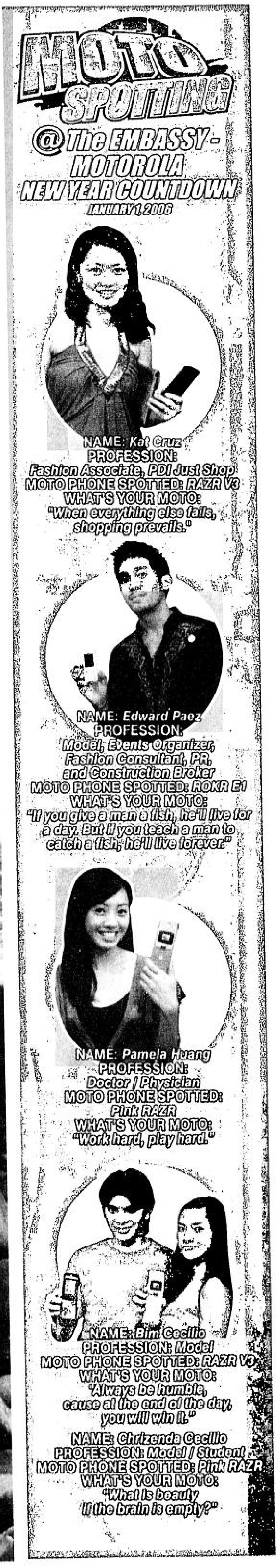

MOTO SPOTTING
@ The EMBASSY - MOTOROLA NEW YEAR COUNTDOWN
JANUARY 1, 2006

NAME: Kat Cruz
PROFESSION:
Fashion Associate, PDI Just Shop
MOTO PHONE SPOTTED: RAZR V3
WHAT'S YOUR MOTO:
"When everything else fails, shopping prevails."

NAME: Edward Paez
PROFESSION:
Model, Events Organizer, Fashion Consultant, PR, and Construction Broker
MOTO PHONE SPOTTED: ROKR E1
WHAT'S YOUR MOTO:
"If you give a man a fish, he'll live for a day. But if you teach a man to catch a fish, he'll live forever."

NAME: Pamela Huang
PROFESSION:
Doctor / Physician
MOTO PHONE SPOTTED:
Pink RAZR
WHAT'S YOUR MOTO:
"Work hard, play hard."

NAME: Bim Cecilio
PROFESSION: Model
MOTO PHONE SPOTTED: RAZR V3
WHAT'S YOUR MOTO:
"Always be humble, cause at the end of the day, you will win it."

NAME: Chrizenda Cecilio
PROFESSION: Model / Student
MOTO PHONE SPOTTED: Pink RAZR
WHAT'S YOUR MOTO:
"What is beauty if the brain is empty?"